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A MODERN PILGRIM IN MECCA

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The author's royalties on the sales of this book are contributed to the funds of the West London Hospital, to which, in his lifetime, he was a regular subscriber.



A MODERN PILGRIM IN MECCA

BY

A. J. B. WAVELL, F.R.G.S.

NEW CHEAPER IMPRESSION

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

MAJOR LEONARD DARWIN

WITH A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR AND A MAP

A

TO

MY MOTHER

A

MAJOR ARTHUR JOHN BYNG WAVELL, M.C., OF WAVELL'S ARABS

When I was President of the Royal Geographical Society a traveller asked to see me concerning a proposed exploration in the wilds of Arabia. There entered my room a young man, rather below the middle height, evidently very light in weight, with dark hair and a much-tanned complexion; and he began discussing the matter in hand—the loan by the Society of some instruments, if I remember rightly—with no assurance of manner and with apparent diffidence. As the conversation proceeded, the doubt entered my mind whether I ought not to utter some words of advice concerning the nerve required for an expedition such as that contemplated; when luckily for me he drove out of my mind all idea of giving any such utterly inappropriate warning by quietly remarking, as if the words were forced out of him by the necessities of the case, "I have already been at Mecca and Medina in disguise." Ever after that interview I watched the career of Arthur Wavell with the greatest interest, for I felt that I had been in contact with an exceptional personality.

This modern pilgrim to Mecca, who was only induced to publish an account of his pilgrimage some time after his return, was not a man easy to get to know by one much older than himself; for he was shy and disinclined to talk, especially in general company. But even in these circumstances his keen wit would occasionally show

itself, whether he wished it or not; whilst in the society of a few of his intimate friends and comrades, and when in congenial surroundings, his conversation was both brilliant and delightfully humorous. And personal danger seems to have been to him the most stimulating of all surroundings. Casual acquaintances must, in fact, often have misjudged him in many respects; for, amongst other things, his rather frail physical appearance gave no indication whatever of his immense powers of endurance. At the outbreak of hostilities in East Africa, for instance, when affairs were in a very critical condition, he marched sixty miles on foot in twenty-eight hours, a very different affair to a march of the same distance on roads in Europe. It was indeed only those who were thrown in contact with him in times of stress who ever fully realized during his lifetime his resourceful energy and his marvellous courage when faced by grave dangers. As to his mental qualities, he had a scholarly mastery of Arabic, a thorough colloquial knowledge of French, Italian and Swahili, and a remarkable knowledge of medicine for a layman, whilst he possessed all those many qualities necessary to make an acute and far-seeing man of business. But here again the powers of his versatile mind were seldom fully recognized except by those who met him in distant lands.

Arthur John Byng Wavell, who was born on May 27, 1882, came of a fighting stock. his father, Colonel A. H. Wavell, having served in the Crimea almost as a boy and later on in more than one campaign in South Africa, whilst his grandfather, General A. G. Wavell, served in the Peninsula and elsewhere. On the side of his mother, a Miss Byng, he was descended from a brother of the ill-fated and ill-used Admiral of that name. Wavell was

educated at Winchester and Sandhurst; and after joining the Welsh Regiment in 1900, he sailed for South Africa in the same year, thus, like his father, seeing active service before he was nineteen years of age.

After serving till the end of the war with his regiment and in the Mounted Infantry, Wavell was employed in examining and reporting on many of the less known districts of British South Africa, a clear proof that he had already shown signs of exceptional capacity. He first travelled for six months in Swaziland, Tongaland and North Zululand, his reports constituting the bulk of a valuable War Office Confidential Précis on these regions. Another confidential document recorded the results of "his long and arduous expedition through the little known country to the north of Bechuanaland," which was officially stated to have been "completed with the most satisfactory results." From July 1904 until the end of October 1905 he was travelling with natives only, and never saw a white man; for while he wholly neglected the risks he foresaw for himself, he would not expose others to like dangers. And the dangers were very great. On one occasion, when he was traversing the territory of a hostile tribe, he had the son of the chief publicly chastised; because he believed that the one and only way of saving the lives of himself and his party was by impressing the whole tribe with a belief in the supreme power of the white man—even if the white man was only twenty-three years of age. After this the chief became both friendly and very helpful; and indeed Wavell reported that he everywhere found "the inhabitants quite peaceable"—a condition of things extraordinarily often experienced in Africa by those who themselves treat the natives well—the journey across the inhospitable Kalahari Desert to the Victoria Falls

being attended with no mishaps. In fact, with his peculiar temperament, he "really had a most pleasant trip," until he reached the Zambezi rapids, where his canoe was swamped, and all his goods lost. By almost a miracle, his most precious possessions, his maps and journals, however, all floated and were picked out of the water, damaged but legible. Unfortunately, he never published any account of his exciting and probably highly amusing personal experiences.

Barrack-square routine soon became intolerable to Wavell after he had once tasted this life of adventure and independence, and he consequently left the Service in 1906 in order to seek more congenial work in distant lands. He first went to East Africa, primarily for his favourite sport of big-game shooting. Finding the country rapidly being opened up, he, however, bought land at Nyali near Mombasa, where he became a pioneer of the Sisal industry, now an important branch of the commerce of that region. Here also he learnt Arabic, and here again, finding that his life did not supply sufficient excitement, he conceived the idea of visiting the forbidden Mohammedan City of Mecca in disguise, in those days as dangerous an adventure as any that he could have selected. The success which crowned his efforts in 1908 are recorded in this volume, a work that needs no introduction. If any of his readers are not charmed with his natural and telling style, or fail to appreciate his flashes of humour, or are not compelled to follow him in his adventures by the interest of his story, then nothing that I could say in praise of his writings would arouse their attention, and nothing therefore will I say. In the second half of this work, to be republished in this series at a later date, a vivid description is given of the abortive attempt he made

in 1910 to penetrate from Sanaa, then under Turkish control, into the region then occupied by the Arabs fighting to regain their liberty from the tyrannical Turk, a deliverance only recently accomplished. Here again his account of his ill-treatment at the hands of his Turkish captors could only be made less thrilling by any such dull preliminary remarks as some editors are so fond of indulging in.

In 1913 Wavell had his name noted as joining the Special Reserve of his old regiment, and when war broke out in the following year, he found himself far away from home on his East African farm. His first thought was to return at once to England to join in the big fight; but this the local authorities wisely would not permit him to do, for the defence of Mombasa, the port and terminus of the Uganda Railway, was a matter of such urgent importance as fully to justify the retention of all trained soldiers within reach. A small volunteer force was first raised in the town; and then Wavell, entirely on his own initiative, at once set to work to enlist the local Arabs, many of whom were water-carriers. He was by no means blind to the "most formidable task" which lay before the defenders, but the facing of the difficulties to be overcome seems to have stirred rather than deadened his sense of humour. "The whole business" of raising this force was to him "extremely funny, and in spite of everything" he laughed more during this period than he had done for years past, so he told his friends. His men were armed with ancient rifles which had been reposing for long in a local military store; but of these quite a number "went off more or less regularly, and comparatively few actually burst." This at all events was Wavell's unofficial account of the raising and equipment of Wavell's Arabs, as they

were at first popularly called, the name of Arab Rifles being conferred on them at a later date at his request. And this little force, at first less than a hundred strong, "soon earned distinction"[1] in the war in East Africa.

Meanwhile the German plan of attack was being developed. Their proposal was to advance with a land force along the road to Mombasa, in truth "one of the vilest paths possible to imagine," whilst at the same time the town was to have been bombarded from the sea. Wavell realized the danger of awaiting the attack near the town when it was thus threatened; and consequently, with his Arabs, a handful of European volunteers, and a few native police, a little over a hundred men in all, he took up a position at Marjorini on the mainland—for Mombasa is on an island. Here he was attacked on September 25 1914, for many hours by a German force considerably superior to his both in numbers and armament; for amongst other things, they had machine-guns and he had none. His men "fought as if they had been soldiers all their lives," and the failure of the Germans to take the blockhouse on to which he had fallen back settled the fate of the day. Here he was "hit through the shoulder and the upper part of the bone of the arm very badly smashed," and here his artillery, a couple of small and ancient guns, came into action in a way which made him laugh "so much that" he "nearly started the bleeding again." Their practice was, however, effective; for we hear from him that the enemy "did not seem to mind bullets, but when it came to 15 lbs. of assorted scrap iron every few minutes" they decided "to go home." By a combination of courage, skill, and bluff he had, in fact, warded off an attack which, in view of the superiority of

[1] *Times History of the War.*

their numbers, might well have ended in the enemy capturing the town and destroying the long railway bridge. It is not too much to say that in these early days on Wavell, and on Wavell alone, depended the safety of Mombasa.

After about two months in hospital, and when by no means cured, he rejoined his Arab corps; the rank of Major having been conferred on him as a reward for his services. Little wonder that he wanted to go back to his men, for they both loved and revered him. Many circumstances combined to give him a wonderful influence over his Mohammedan soldiers, including his knowledge of Arabic, his courage and character, and his pilgrimage to Mecca. And though one arm was still useless, the country could no longer spare the services of such a leader.

Wavell was then placed in command of Mwele, a post established in order to guard fifty miles of the Uganda Railway; and here he was for many months in close proximity to the enemy, who were constantly making little attacks on this important line of communication. In January 1916 a report was received that a party of Germans were within eight miles of his post; and on the following day, the 8th of the month, he set out with some eighty men to reconnoitre or to attack as circumstances might direct. His party came under a heavy fire from a superior force hidden in the dense bush; and one of the first of these shots chanced to explode a box of bombs close to Wavell, who fell wounded in the leg. He soon stood up again, and began firing his light rifle with his one available arm, when he was shot in the chest and killed. The party had then to retreat, and he was buried by the Germans, who put up a cross over his grave. And here lay "a most gallant officer who," his General said, had

" done splendid work ever since the beginning of the war." And here ended a life of a span of less than thirty-four years, a life which, as all in East Africa knew, had it been spared, would have been of great value to our country; for he was of the race of Empire-builders.

LEONARD DARWIN.

1918

FROM THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE FIRST IMPRESSION

THE journey to Mecca and Medina is perhaps an experience sufficiently out of the common to be worth recounting; especially as a good many years have gone by since the last Englishman to intrude himself into those places told the story of his adventures.

I cannot claim any scientific value for this work, except in so far as spadework in exploration, as in politics, may have its uses.

In transliterating Arabic words I have not followed any recognized system. It seems to me that it must be more trouble to learn the proper use of the accents and diacritical marks than the Arabic character itself. Therefore, in the case of proper names I have stuck to the conventional spelling, and with other words I have tried to represent the true sound as nearly as can be done with the ordinary letters used in English. The result, I admit, is not satisfactory, and inconsistencies abound. It serves, however, to illustrate the great need for some new convention on the subject. I have done my best to introduce as few Arabic words as possible into the text, and have tried to avoid the irritating trick of putting the Eastern idiom into the English version along with the sense.

I am indebted to Mr. D. G. Hogarth's book, *The Penetration of Arabia*, for much of the geographical information, and to Professor D. Margoliouth's *Mohammed*, Washington Irving's *Mahomet and His Successors*, and several Arab writers, for many of my historical facts.

A. J. B. W.

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A MODERN PILGRIM IN MECCA

INTRODUCTION

SOME apology is necessary for beginning a book of this description with a dissertation on the Geography of Arabia, and the tenets of one of the most widely-spread religions of the world; for the elements of both might well be supposed to be common knowledge. It is my experience, however, that this is not always the case, and since a general comprehension of these matters is essential to any interest the experiences to be related may have, I am devoting some space to their consideration for the benefit of such of my readers as have not found time to study Oriental subjects.

Our ignorance concerning Arabia may be attributed to the scarcity of literature on the subject—more especially of English literature. Nor is this scarcity surprising, when we come to consider the character of the country and its people. Though the peninsula has an area of about a million and a half square miles, that is to say, though it is larger than India south of the fifteenth parallel, it contains at the most five inland cities worthy of the name. These are, in order of importance, Mecca, Medina, Sanaa, Hail and Riadh—the claim of the last two to the

title resting merely on the fact that they are the capital towns of settled communities. Yet we can without difficulty enumerate the European visitors to them all. It is moderately certain, in the first place, that no professing Christian has set foot in either Mecca or Medina since the time of the Prophet. The Europeans who are known to have been to Mecca during the past hundred years number rather more than a dozen,[1] and of these four, including the writer, have been Englishmen. The visitors to Medina have been fewer still. Travellers to these places have invariably made the journey in one of two ways: either by the public profession of Islam or in disguise. As regards the former, several Western converts to Islam have doubtless made the pilgrimage, and probably many of the European officers in the Egyptian service who had forsworn Christianity found their way there at the time of Mohammed Ali's occupation of the Hedjaz; none of these, however, would seem to have recorded their experiences.

The first accurate description of Mecca in a European language was by "Ali Bey," a Spaniard, in 1807. The more celebrated Swiss traveller Burchardt, who by long residence in the East had come to be considered a genuine Moslem, went there in 1814 and gave us a full and scientific account of his journey. He was followed in 1853 by Sir Richard Burton, who made the pilgrimage disguised as an Indian doctor, and by Keane, another Englishman, in 1877. In 1885 Dr. Hugronge, a Dutchman, spent several months in Mecca, outside the pilgrimage season.

[1] This is exclusive of European Moslems, such as Albanians and Russians, and also of converts—an uncertain quantity. Nor does it include those that have gone there involuntarily as prisoners, such as the Englishwoman found there by Keane, nor yet some who are believed to have perished there.

His book, the most comprehensive work on the subject we possess, is in German, and has not, unfortunately, been translated. The list of visitors to Sanaa is longer, but they do not probably much exceed a score; while not more than half-a-dozen Europeans have seen Hail in modern times, and only two have reached Riadh, namely Palgrave in 1863, and Colonel Pelly in 1864.

It will thus be understood why these places, though they have been described, and well described, by Western travellers of several nationalities, remain in a sense unknown to the world at large. Arabia, in spite of its proximity to Europe, is still in great measure unexplored, even in a geographical sense; and very little news concerning events taking place there, even in the more civilized parts, finds its way into the European Press.

The general physical character of the peninsula may be well appreciated by considering it as an oblong plateau, tilted up at its south-west corner. Meteorological conditions have favoured the disintegration of part of the elevated corner and the spreading of the detritus over the rest of the peninsula. The existence of this high ground likewise causes the premature precipitation of the moisture brought from the Indian Ocean by the south-west monsoon, with the result that the interior is nearly rainless. There is only one true mountain-range—so far as we know—the Gebel Akhdar in Oman. The mountainous country in the south-west is merely the broken edge of the plateau. The main water-courses, which trend as a rule north-east to the Persian Gulf, are merely torrent beds containing no perennial water above ground; though in many of them sufficient water can be obtained by sinking wells to maintain a more or less settled population along their course.

As might be expected, given such conditions, much of the country is desert. There are in fact several kinds of desert in Arabia, varying in degree of aridity. The plains of the Nafud, for instance, through absence of water support no settled population, but are yet by no means sterile, and afford grazing for flocks and herds throughout part of the year. There are deserts of lava, and mountainous deserts, and finally the "empty quarter," as the Arabs call it, which occupies the whole of the south central region. Concerning this last we know little or nothing; it is quite unexplored, and even Arab geographers are silent concerning it. On these grounds it is assumed to be an impenetrable wilderness of sand; but mountains, lakes, or even cities may exist there for all we know to the contrary. It is eight hundred miles across, so such speculations are permissible, even while admitting their improbability.

The deserts of Arabia are interspersed with tracts of country where more favourable conditions prevail, which are capable of supporting nomad, and, more rarely, settled communities. The elevated south-west corner is well watered and generally fertile. The great valley of Hadramout, which proceeds from it and discharges into the Arabian Sea, is in its upper reaches fairly densely populated. The valleys that drain towards the Gulf are inhabited at intervals. Except in the great southern desert oases are not uncommon.

The western borderlands and Oman are the most favoured parts of Arabia in the all-important matter of rainfall. The former in the south obtain all they require, but farther north, as the altitude diminishes, the country rapidly becomes sterile. There is little fertility in Hedjaz beyond a few oases, such as that of Taif, and Medina.

Oman owes its comparatively abundant water-supply to a lofty mountain-range, composed of intrusive igneous rocks, and with this exception the south and east coasts are dry and barren.

To turn from the physical to the political geography of the peninsula, we note that the countries adjoining the coast are administered or "protected" by European Powers, and that the central communities remain independent. The whole of the Red Sea coast, together with its hinterland, is comprised in the three Ottoman provinces of Hedjaz, Asir, and Yemen. Great Britain holds the Aden peninsula, and protects a small area on the mainland, with certain other towns on the south coast. Muscat is nominally an independent Sultanate where British influence predominates. The Gulf coast is divided between certain so-called "trucial chiefs" who have come to some arrangement with the Government of India, and others, farther north, who acknowledge Turkish suzerainty.

Hail and Riadh are the capitals of the two independent Arab states which divide between them the habitable parts of Central Arabia, known as Negd. Both are principalities, and both profess allegiance to the Wahabi doctrine, which will be explained later. They are constantly at war with each other. The Ottoman Government bases a claim to protect these countries on the Sultan's pretensions to the Caliphate. The idea, however, that the Sultan of Turkey, being "Commander of the Faithful," can thereby claim the allegiance of all true Moslems, is as likely to find acceptance in India or Persia as in any part of Negd.

The inhabitants of the peninsula belong to a Semitic race —that is to say, they are of the same family ethnologically as the Jews, whom in many respects they closely resemble.

An Arab author writes of them, "Nothing is more obscure than the early history of this race; but they are classified in three divisions: the Baidah, the Ariba, and the Mustariba. The Baidah (the perished) are those of extreme antiquity, concerning whom little is known to us. Such, for instance, were Aad, Thamoud, and the first Jurham. As for the Ariba, or true Arabs, they are the people of the Yemen, the children of Kahtan; while the Mustariba, or Arabs by adoption, are the sons of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, who, as it is said, came in contact with the second Jurham of the race of Kahtan, and married into that tribe. His descendants are called Arabs by adoption, because Ishmael was a Hebrew by birth and in language. From the Ariba and Mustariba originated the Arab tribes as known at the present day."

Kahtan (or Jocktan) was the son of Abeis, the son of Shalah, the son of Arfakhshad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah. He is said to have been the first to speak the Arabic language.

Arabic and Hebrew are nearly allied, and are the only living representatives of the linguistic group to which Chaldæan, Syriac, and many other dead languages belong. The Arabs are distributed in tribes, and are essentially a nomadic people. Physically, they are a handsome race, small and slight in stature, in colour light brown to white. It will be understood that we are speaking here of the nomad tribesmen of Negd and Hedjaz, not of the settled populations found in the south-west and in towns; nor yet of Egyptians, Moors, Syrians or others, sometimes loosely termed Arabs. The true Arab has sharp aquiline features, straight black hair on his head, and very little on his face. He is generally depicted as

a tall, imposing-looking person, of dark complexion, with a flowing beard; but this is wrong.

These two races, the Arabs and the Jews, so nearly alike as they are physically and intellectually, yet differ widely in certain moral qualities. The Arabs in the past have shown great capacity not only for waging war on a large scale but for administering and civilizing the countries conquered. They made for themselves an empire larger than that of Rome, if somewhat less durable. They have imposed their language and religion on a considerable portion of the world's inhabitants. Withal they have few if any business or commercial aptitudes, and are the reverse of thrifty. In character they are brave, cunning, and somewhat cruel; honest in their own way, and faithful to their word once given. They are renowned for their hospitality and chivalrous protection of strangers.

Such, then, in brief, are the characteristics of the Bedou, that is to say, the true Arabs of the desert. In the settled districts of the peninsula, and among urban populations, these attributes have become much modified by contact with other races. The institution of slavery, with the fact that the offspring of unions contracted with slave women are considered as legitimate, is largely responsible for this. Nearly all the Arabs of Muscat, for example, have a strain of African blood, and it is not uncommon to find individuals claiming descent from the Prophet who are to all appearance pure negroes. In Medina, again, constant intermarriage with Turks, Kurds, and Persians has almost obliterated the original Semitic type, so that the inhabitants are Arabs only in their language and customs. In the Yemen the population has always been settled and devoted to agriculture in contradistinction to the nomad

pastoralists we have been discussing. The Persian and Abyssinian invasions of that country have left their mark so far that the people inhabiting it to-day are really Arabs in name only, and have little in common with the Bedou. Their language contains so many foreign words that, apart from its structure, it might sometimes be difficult to recognize its origin.

The history of Arabia prior to the advent of Islam will be alluded to later. Readers will recall that the Queen of Sheba (Saba) came from there. The capital of the Sabæan kingdom, called Marib, was situated not far from the present-day city of Sanaa. The Arabs are accustomed to boast that their country has never submitted to foreign rule. This is in the main true, for though it has been frequently invaded, no foreign occupation of any part of the interior has hitherto been more than temporary. The Roman Emperor Augustus, under the mistaken impression that Arabia was a rich country which it would be worth while to annex, sent an expedition there under a certain Ælius Gallius which merely succeeded in demonstrating the contrary. This delusion was probably due to the riches which arrived at Arabian ports from the Far East being considered as having come from Arabia itself. The general's description of the country and its people on his return was not of a nature to encourage further enterprises of the sort.

We may conclude that at the beginning of the seventh century Arabia was regarded in official circles at Byzantium in very much the same light as Somaliland is to-day at Whitehall. A nasty, unhealthy country, chiefly remarkable for its extreme sterility, peopled by wandering tribes of equally unpleasant barbarians—it was very much better left alone. None could have guessed what was

maturing, or have foreseen that events then taking place in an obscure town there, were destined to culminate in the explosion which overthrew the Roman Empire, and imposed an alien religion and civilization on the greater part of the inhabited world as it was known in those days.

The prophet Mohammed was born in Mecca in the year A.D. 569. The tribe of Koreish, to which his family belonged, was predominant among the clans of that town and considered second to none in Arabia in point of lineage and honourable traditions. His father and mother, however, were people of small means and no particular consequence. Left an orphan at an early age, he was brought up by his uncle, Abu Talib, the keeper of the Meccan shrine, a rich and powerful man of generous disposition. His education, however, was neglected, and unlike his cousin Ali, the son of Abu Talib, he was not taught to read and write. On growing up he made the acquaintance of Khadijah, a rich widow considerably older than himself, who entrusted him with the conduct of a caravan conveying merchandise to Syria, and on his return married him. There is nothing in his history very remarkable so far.

Finding himself thus, at the age of twenty-five, relieved from all necessity of working for his living, Mohammed had leisure to devote himself to politics and subjects of abstract interest. His wife was devoted to him, and for some years he lived with her as happily and contentedly as other men of easy-going temperament and no particular ambitions, similarly situated, did then and do now. They had one son, Kasim, who died in infancy, and four daughters, of whom Fatima is the most famous.

Mecca was at that time not merely a commercial town

of some importance, but the centre of an idolatrous cult widespread throughout Arabia. Pilgrims flocked to the city to visit the celebrated temple known as the Kaaba, which was surrounded by three hundred and sixty idols—one for each day of their year. At a certain time every year there was a sort of fair there, to which many foreign merchants brought their wares. Among them came frequently Jews and Christians, who seem to have been fond of discussing their rival creeds after business hours with any one who cared to argue with them. Mohammed, having plenty of spare time, was fond of these disputations, and no doubt acquired therefrom much of the philosophy and knowledge of the outside world that he afterwards displayed. He also began to give evidence of an emotional temperament and a tendency to asceticism. He would withdraw himself from human society for days at a time in order to meditate apart on some point that had aroused his interest.

At the age of about forty he began to see visions. He may or may not have been subject previously to epileptic seizures. The evidence therefor is not conclusive, and the point is in any case unimportant. These revelations, or hallucinations, as most of my readers will prefer to call them, nearly always took the same form. An angel stood before him and communicated to him passages from a book which he commanded him to proclaim to the whole world. The earlier revelations were in a sort of rhymed prose peculiar to the Arabic language; their force and beauty have seldom been disputed by the most relentless enemies of the religion he formulated.

Mohammed confided these experiences to his wife and sought her advice. She had been, naturally enough, more concerned than impressed by his previous eccentricities.

The visions continued and became ever more insistent. Mohammed allowed himself to be convinced, and enunciated in public the following extraordinary doctrine: that there was only one God, and that he, Mohammed, was His prophet.

Khadijah, needless to say, was his first convert, and others soon followed, Ali among the earliest. Abu Talib made no objection, and seems for long to have regarded his nephew's latest aberration with tolerant amusement, as likewise did most of the townspeople, with whom Mohammed was rather popular than otherwise.

The new religion, however, began to gain converts in numbers which menaced certain vested interests. Mecca depended for its prosperity on the pilgrims to the shrine, and, obviously, if one of the principal citizens were to be allowed, not only to condemn and ridicule the existing religious system, but to convert others to his views, that prosperity was likely to suffer. Though they were by no means fanatical, it yet certainly behoved the Meccans to keep an eye on their material interests. Such at any rate was the opinion at the time.

In Arabia, when the continued existence of an individual seems to the public to be undesirable, he is generally assassinated. The Meccans, however, were very reluctant to adopt this simple method of dealing with the situation, because it would have involved a blood feud between Mohammed's family, the Benee Hashim, and that to which the assassin happened to belong. The Benee Hashim were a very powerful force at the time, and Abu Talib, who was fond of his nephew, was not a man to fall foul of lightly. Mohammed therefore was allowed to continue his preaching for several years almost unmolested, and it was only when the defection of some of their

principal citizens awoke the Meccans to the gravity of the danger, that strong measures were ultimately adopted. In order to minimize the risk of civil war, it was arranged that a representative of every family in Mecca, except the Benee Hashim, should take part in the murder.

Mohammed, however, got wind of the plot and fled to Medina, where he was followed in course of time by most of his disciples. The people of this town, which lies about three hundred miles north of Mecca on the road between that place and Syria, had shown themselves particularly well disposed to receive his teaching. The circumstances of his escape were sensational; and it owed its success largely to the brave action of Ali, then a youth of about nineteen years of age, who awaited the assassins in the Prophet's place. The miraculous incident of the spider which built its web, and the pigeon its nest, in the mouth of the cave in which Mohammed and his companion, Abu Bakar, were hiding, thus deceiving their pursuers, took place on this occasion. The year of Mohammed's flight to Medina, known as the Hegrah, is the starting-point of the Moslem reckoning of dates. It corresponds to the year A.D. 622.

At Medina Mohammed found himself a poverty-stricken exile, and suffered great hardship for a time. He and his companions were often short of food. He continued none the less to make converts in ever-increasing numbers, and daily gained in influence. A quarrel between him and the Jews led to the expulsion of the latter. The Meccans viewed the growing power of the new sect with great concern, owing to the geographical position of Medina, lying as it did on their main line of communication with Syria. War soon broke out, and the first battle was fought at Badr in the year A.H. 2 (A.D. 624). In this the

Moslems were victorious, but they were defeated the following year at Uhud, close to Medina, when nothing but the bad generalship of the Meccan commander saved them from total destruction. Mohammed, on the other hand, displayed remarkable military talent in rapidly reorganizing his dispirited followers and taking the field again the following day. The Meccans neglected to pursue their advantage, and retired. Mohammed's activity and prestige remaining undiminished by this reverse, they returned the following year in greater force. The Prophet, however, had constructed a formidable earthwork round the town, known as the "Khandak," and celebrated in Moslem history, behind which he retired, and the Meccans, after besieging the place for some time, were forced to withdraw. The only fighting that took place was in a series of single combats between various champions from the opposing armies, in which Ali specially distinguished himself.

A truce was now concluded, one of the conditions being that Mohammed should be allowed to make the Mecca pilgrimage, which he did in company with many of his disciples. This truce was soon afterwards broken, or alleged to have been broken, by the Meccans. The Prophet, whose power had been fast growing latterly, thereupon assembled an army of ten thousand men and marched rapidly on Mecca, which surrendered without a battle. The idols were destroyed, and the Kaaba again dedicated to the service of the one true God.

Several other campaigns were fought, in some of which the Prophet himself led the Moslem army against recalcitrant tribes. He sent messages to foreign rulers demanding their submission. At the time of his death, eleven years after his flight from Mecca, most of the Arabians

had acknowledged his prophetic mission. He married in all eleven wives,[1] the most celebrated of whom, after Khadijah, who died before the Hegrah, is Aesha, the daughter of Abu Bakar. Beside Kasim, he had one other son, Ibrahim, who also died in early childhood. His daughter Fatima, shortly after their arrival in Medina, had been married to Ali, and had borne him two sons, Hassan and Hussein, of tragic destiny. The Prophet died and was buried at Medina at the age of sixty-three. Fatima was the only one of his children to survive him.

Mohammed in the prime of life was a man of medium stature, rather thick set. He had black hair and beard, a pleasant expression, and remarkably bright eyes. His complexion was fair.

This is no place to discuss the validity of his claims to Divine inspiration; but one thing is as certain as anything can be that is not utterly demonstrable, and that is that he believed in them himself. Regarded from an ordinary standpoint, he was a man of sound common-sense, personal bravery, and gentle disposition. His life was consistent with the ethical code he preached. He had great breadth of mind and a sense of humour capable of appreciating a joke against himself, as the following anecdote concerning him will show. In the early days of his sojourn in Medina, the Prophet and his followers were often hungry. He would never accept any luxuries for himself in which the latter could not share. One day he and Ali were eating dates and depositing the stones in front of them. Mohammed put his stones with those of Ali, so that at the end of

[1] Authorities differ as to the exact number. Mohammed claimed for himself a special indulgence in this matter. Four is the greatest number permitted by the Koran.

the meal there was a large heap in front of Ali, and none in front of the Prophet. "Surely," said he, in calling Ali's attention to this, "it is greedy to eat so many dates at one sitting." "Surely, O Apostle of God," responded Ali, "it is still more greedy to eat the stones as well as the dates." At which, we are told, the Prophet laughed heartily.

He detested hypocrisy in any form, and had no liking for pomp and ceremony. At the height of his power he lived the life of an ordinary citizen of Medina. He was always accessible and willing to discuss matters with, and explain things to, any one who cared to come to him. He was good to the poor and very fond of children. He constantly enjoined on his followers kindness to animals.

Mohammed did not claim the power of working miracles. The Koran itself, he said, was a miracle sufficient to convince the most stubborn. The marvellous stories related concerning him, how he made water gush from dry rocks, and put the moon up his sleeve, are mere fables; and find no place in the works of serious Moslem historians. He did claim, however, to have received miraculous help on several occasions—in the cave, for instance, and at the battle of Badr.

The death of Mohammed was followed by the defection of many of the tribes which had accepted his religion in his lifetime, and by a violent quarrel among his late lieutenants, as to who should succeed him in the supreme temporal power. Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, who had followed his fortunes from the very first, and moreover distinguished himself both in the field and in council, had seemingly the best claim. There were, however, certain objections to his candidature; and the choice fell

eventually on Abu Bakar, the Prophet's companion in the adventure of "The Cave."

No wiser selection probably could have been made. The situation was critical, and both tact and firmness were required to deal with it, which Abu Bakar possessed in far higher degree than Ali, who was more at home in a hand-to-hand fight, where valour rather than diplomacy was required.

Abu Bakar, then, assumed command, taking the title of "Kahleefa-t-urrasool," which is shortened and corrupted into "Caliph" in this language, and means "Successor of the Apostle." He was equally successful in settling domestic differences and in suppressing revolts among the Arab tribes. Several false prophets who had appeared in imitation of Mohammed had to be crushed.

These things accomplished, the Caliph turned his attention to foreign conquest. He sent an expedition to Syria, at that time a Byzantine province, which inflicted defeat after defeat on the Christian armies. Damascus, and soon afterwards Jerusalem, fell to the Moslem arms. Another Arab army advanced into Mesopotamia and completely routed the Persians in a series of pitched battles.

Abu Bakar died shortly after the capture of Damascus, bequeathing his powers to Omar, likewise one of the Prophet's oldest and most valued friends. This choice, at the time, met with fairly general acceptance. In assuming office, Omar pointed out that to be accurate he should be called the successor of the successor of the Apostle, and as this would go on indefinitely, he suggested an alternative title. "You are the faithful," said he, "and I am your prince; call me therefore Ameer-ul-mumineen (= Prince or Commander of the Faithful, the title claimed to-day by the Sultans of Turkey).

Omar continued the aggressive foreign policy initiated by Abu Bakar. Byzantium had not recovered from the astonishment and dismay occasioned by the loss of the Syrian province, when the Moslem general, Amru-bn-il-Aas, at the head of a few thousand warriors, followed by a motley rabble of women, children, and slaves, appeared in Egypt. This audacious incursion was viewed at first with amusement, which soon changed to consternation when in every engagement that took place the disciplined Roman legionaries broke and fled before the furious onslaught of the Arab swordsmen. Aided by the treachery of the Copts, who sided with the invaders against the Romans, Amru rapidly subdued all Egypt. Alexandria finally surrendered to him in A.H. 19 (A.D. 640). By order of Omar himself, so it is said, the famous library there was destroyed by the Arabs.

Space will not allow of our tracing further the history of the Moslem conquests. Fifty years after the Prophet's flight to Medina, Islam was supreme in Spain, North Africa, Asia Minor, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia, and was still spreading. As was to be expected, the empire founded in this way and built up so rapidly did not long hold together. The Benee Omayah in Spain, the Moguls in India, and others founded separate Moslem states, denying allegiance to the Caliphate of Bagdad. None the less it is probable that Haroun-er-Raschid and his successors wielded more absolute power over a greater number of human beings than any rulers before or since their time. Gibbon, in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, points out how nearly France came to sharing the fate of Spain. The issue hung on a single battle,[1] in which the Moslems were worsted. Had the

[1] Poitiers, A.D. 732.

result been otherwise, the Conqueror would probably have been an Arab and England to-day a Moslem instead of a Christian country.

The Arabian empires fell in time, but the propagation of Islam was carried on by the Turks with almost equal energy, and in the seventeenth century once more it seemed likely to subjugate Christianity in the West as it had done in the East. The fear of this happening dominated European policy for centuries, and has not yet entirely disappeared.

The courts of the Moslem emperors were centres of light and learning in the dark ages. Science and art prospered under their rule, as many splendid monuments testify. The frugal simplicity of life inculcated by the Prophet, and practised by the first Caliphs, gave place with their successors to an unexampled extravagance.

It remains, before taking leave of the subject, to describe briefly the events in Arabia that followed on the death of Othman, the third Caliph, who was assassinated in A.H. 35.

Ali, by this time an old man, took his place, but his right to do so was challenged by Mouawiyah, who accused him, quite falsely in all probability, of being concerned in the murder of Othman. Civil war broke out, and the empire was divided till the murder of Ali at Kerbela in A.H. 40 left his rival in possession of the field.

Hassan, Ali's son, who succeeded him, abdicated in favour of Mouawiyah, who was the first to establish an hereditary dynasty in Islam.

His descendants, known as the Benee Omayah, reigned in the East till they were overthrown by the Benee Abbas, descended from the uncle of Mohammed, in A.H. 132.

The Benee Omayah, however, continued to rule in

Andalusia till the Arab was replaced by the Moorish Empire three centuries later.

Mouawiyah was succeeded by his son Yazeed, who is accused of having instigated the murders of Hassan and Hussein, the grandsons of the Prophet. The former was poisoned, and the latter slain in battle, together with most of his family, near Cufa in Mesopotamia. Their deaths may be considered as marking the end of the first great epoch in the history of Islam: the period in which the rulers and generals were men who had known Mohammed personally, and had shared the privations and struggles of the early part of his prophetic career.

What marvellous changes they had witnessed with their own eyes may be realized when we recall that at the battle of Badr, one of the most decisive in the world's history, the Moslem host numbered but three hundred and fourteen warriors. About forty years later Ali and Mouawiyah, in skirmishing on the banks of the Euphrates, preliminary to a serious engagement, lost between them seventy thousand men.

The most surprising transformations conceived by the author of the *Arabian Nights* do not surpass in wonder what these men actually experienced. The handful of camel herdsmen and petty traders who in their youth took part in the faction fighting round Mecca and Medina, found themselves in their middle age commanding armies or governing vast provinces. Mouawiyah, who, at the time of Mohammed's death, was old enough to appreciate him, came to rule, ere his own decease, over an empire greater than that of Rome, and to dispose of riches almost beyond computation.

We may now turn from the history to the tenets of Mohammed's religion, and endeavour to understand

wherein lay the force that produced these astonishing results. The revelations, to which allusion has already been made, continued at irregular intervals throughout the Prophet's life. They were communicated by him to his companions, who either wrote them down or learnt them by heart. They varied much in character. Some took the form of allegorical rhapsodies, some were straightforward admonitions. Others, again, were concerned with the ordinary affairs of daily life, having regard especially to the conditions then obtaining. History, politics, and philosophy were dealt with. A complete civil and criminal code has been deduced from them.

At the time of Mohammed's death no attempt had been made to put them together in the form of a book. It does not seem to have occurred to him that this should be done if they were to be preserved. Abu Bakar, however, observing how rapidly the generation which had known the Prophet was passing away, perceived the danger, and appointed a sort of "Royal Commission" to collect and collate them. The result of their labours, which were not completed till the reign of Othman, is the Koran. Though it is rank heresy to doubt the authenticity of any part of the work, one may be forgiven for assuming that much was lost and much more has been inaccurately rendered. No attempt was made to arrange the chapters in chronological order or with regard to their subject-matter.

The Koran teaches that there is one God only, eternal, infinite, and incomprehensible, and that he was the God of Adam, Moses, Christ, and the other prophets of old. He has revealed his will several times previously, in the form of books, the most important among them being the Taurat and the Ingeel, *i. e.* the Old Testament and the Gospel. The current versions of these having how-

ever become corrupted, the Koran is revealed to Mohammed to supersede them.[1]

The main dogmas on which the religions derived from these books are based remain unaltered. The theorems of the immortality of the soul, the day of judgment, heaven and hell, Satan the enemy of mankind, angels, devils, etc., as previously enunciated, are confirmed in general principles by the Koran. The moral code set forth is that of the ten commandments, and exhortations to humility, chastity, temperance, and charity occur constantly. Many Biblical stories tending to illustrate these virtues are repeated.

A great part of the book, however, is devoted to insisting on the absolute unity of the Godhead. God, we are told, will forgive every sin except that of associating Him with something else. The 112th chapter, which is considered equal in value to a third of the whole book, runs as follows:

"Say He is one God, the eternal God: He begetteth not, neither was He begat: neither is there any like unto Him."

In fact, quite a third of the Koran is actually devoted to saying the same thing in other words.

This brings us to the thorny subject of the relations between Islam and Christianity in matters of dogma. There is no doubt that Mohammed himself fully expected to "rope in"—if one may use such an expression—both

[1] The Arabic word for "a God" is Ilahun—in the nominative singular. With the definite article, this becomes by elision Allahu, and means *the* God, *i. e.* the one true God. So the creed "La Ilaha illa'llaha" means "There is no God but *the* God." The curious idea that "Alla" is a deity peculiar to the Moslems must have arisen from ignorance of the meaning of the word, which is used by Arabic-speaking Christians as well as Moslems.

The word "Koran" simply means "reading." Mosque is derived from "Masgid," and means literally "a place of bowing."

Jews and Christians, and was bitterly disappointed at his failure to do so. The Koran contains frequent references to Jesus the son of Mary, who is called the Messiah and the "pure in heart"; the doctrine of the virgin birth receives confirmation. The Jews are reproached for their refusal to accept Christ's teaching; the Christians for their perversion of it. The doctrine that Christ was the Son of God is characterized as a fearful blasphemy.

It is evident that the two religions come near to standing on common ground. It must be remembered that the doctrine thus denounced was interpreted at the time in the most literal sense possible. So it would appear to be to-day by the official Churches of Christendom, but it is probable that this view would not be so tenaciously held but for the formidable opposition to it offered by the Koran. With the exception of the Prophet himself, thinkers on both sides have been much more concerned to discover fresh differences than grounds for accord. Throughout the Koran Jews and Christians are referred to as "people of the book," and treated on a different footing from ordinary unbelievers and idolaters. The words of the Koran on the subject of the crucifixion are obscure. "They did not kill him, neither did they crucify him, but something like unto him . . . and God took him to Himself."

Justification by faith is another very contentious point. Going farther, apparently, than what had preceded it, the Koran promises eventual salvation to all believers in the cardinal doctrine, whatever they may do in this life—a postulate to which the existence of purgatory is evidently a necessary consequence.

The tenet of predestination enunciated in the Koran has been vehemently assailed, and Moslems themselves

are not agreed about it. It seems, however, merely a corollary to the proposition of an all-powerful and all-knowing deity.

It is worthy of note that orthodox Islam accepts as dogmas certain beliefs which are held by the Churches of Christendom to be irreconcilable one with another. The doctrine that the eventual fate of the soul is foreordained is of course the essence of Calvinism. Moslem ideas concerning the Caliphate correspond nearly to the Roman Catholic views on apostolic succession. Yet the supremacy of the Scripture is insisted on as in the Church of England. The Caliph, though he is supposed to enjoy to some extent Divine guidance, is held incompetent to decide whether or not a proposed action is in keeping with the law, and must submit to the judgment of those versed in the interpretation of the sacred books. In modern Turkey this right of veto is exercised by the Sheikh of Islam, who answers questions put to him as to the legality of a proceeding by what is called a fatwa. Thus "Is it lawful to depose a Caliph who misgoverns?" Fatwa: "The sacred law says, Yes."

Concerning that part of the Koran which deals with practical legislation, we need only remark that the civil laws still work fairly well, and that the criminal code is much too draconian for modern use.

The positive duties of a believer are four, namely prayer, alms, fasting, and pilgrimage for such as can afford it. To these we shall refer again later. The most distinctive negative precepts of the Koran are its prohibition of certain kinds of food, pork among them, usury, gaming, and wine. It is not, however, universally admitted that the use of the last in moderation is altogether forbidden. In any case, this law is very badly kept.

Beside the Koran, and next to it in importance in Moslem eyes, are the six books of the "Sunna" or "Ahadeeth." These are the traditions concerning the Prophet. Though belief in them is not an article of faith, they are none the less accepted unreservedly by most orthodox Moslems, and to them may be traced many of the superstitious fancies which now disfigure the primitive simplicity of the Islamic creed. They are very numerous—the writer has before him a book containing ten thousand of Mohammed's alleged sayings, of which probably less than one per cent. have the smallest claim to credence. Unless, indeed, the Prophet was in the habit of contradicting himself every few minutes, the most cursory study of them renders this obvious. He is reputed to have said, by way of illustration, that Islam would eventually be divided into seventy-two sects, all of which would end in hell, except one. He did not say which!

The first part of this alleged prophecy has, however, very nearly come true. Islam, to-day, is divided into two main branches, each of which considers the other heretical. These in turn are subdivided into sects differing from one another on points of ritual only, and there are a number of less important cults doubtfully classed as Moslems. The schism between the two great divisions, known as the Sunna and Sheia, began in the political quarrel about the succession. To put it as briefly as may be, the Sunna hold that the office of Caliph devolves naturally on the most powerful Moslem prince for the time being, or on any one else elected thereto, irrespective of descent or even nationality. The Sheia, on the other hand, contend that the office is for ever vested in the descendants of the Prophet through Ali and Fatima. They believe that Ali was unjustly deprived of his rights by the first three Caliphs.

The question is of great importance at the present day, in view of Ottoman pan-Islamic aspirations. According to the first view there is no reason why the Sultan of Turkey should not be Commander of the Faithful and claim as such the allegiance of the Moslem world, but in the Sheia creed this is *ex hypothesi* impossible.

The Persians, about half the Indian Moslems, and many of the Arab tribes are Sheia; the Turks, Africans, Afghans, and the rest generally, are Sunna. The latter are divided into four principal sects, regarded as of equal orthodoxy, and named respectively, Shafei, Hanafi, Maliki, and Hambali—after the learned men who founded them. There is no necessity for the Moslem to belong to any one of them; he may, if he please, remain an independent believer.

We have, so far, been considering Islam as it appears from a study of the history and contents of the sacred books themselves. Had we proceeded to deduce their nature from the opinions concerning them held by the present-day professors of the religion, the result would have been different. The Moslem ecclesiastic of to-day regards the Koran, not merely as an inspired utterance, in the ordinary sense, but as the actual word of God Himself put into the mouth of His Prophet. As such, it is incontrovertible and eternal, and no free interpretation, having regard to altered circumstances, is permissible.

To realize his point of view, we may imagine the case of a Christian who took the books of Revelation, and Leviticus absolutely literally, instead of regarding the one as allegorical and the other as out of date. Had the Koran described a bull with fifteen brazen tails, the Moslem child would be taught to believe that such a beast actually existed somewhere or other. Because the lopping off of hands and feet as a punishment for theft was necessary

and desirable in Arabia a thousand years ago, the same, it is insisted, must be equally desirable in Constantinople, at the present time.

The moral precepts of the Koran are neglected, while the minutiæ of its ritual are strictly observed. A devout Turk, to put it shortly, thinks that as long as he says his prayers regularly, fasts in Ramadan, and avoids pork, it does not much matter what else he does or does not do.

This very sketchy exposition of a vast and highly-contentious subject will have served its purpose if it helps readers unacquainted with the subject to understand in some measure the Moslem's position in modern life, and his relations with his Christian neighbours. Since Islam has fared very badly at the hands of Christian writers, both ancient and modern, it will be more interesting to look at that question from the other side—if only for a change.

Putting aside as untenable the theory that the Prophet was an absolute impostor, we will deal first with the favourite accusation that his religion has been propagated solely by the sword. Yet the Moslem sacred law states that no one shall be compelled to accept Islam; and this has been more than once invoked by the ecclesiastical against the temporal authority in Turkey. The Arab Caliphs enjoined on their generals respect, not only for the persons, but for the property and religious edifices of Christians. We ourselves have not been entirely guiltless in the matter of forcing our civilization on peoples who did not want it, and at the time of writing a war is in progress declared by a Christian on a Moslem power for that avowed purpose.

The history of Islam is a record of bloodshed and debauchery, but not more so than that of Christendom. Fanatical religious sentiment has been the cause of much

suffering and strife in the case of the former, but it is doubtful if a parallel for the treachery of St. Bartholomew's Eve or the cruelties of the Inquisition can be found in Moslem annals.

The position of women in Moslem countries is often pointed to as an evil inherent in this religious system, but neither the Koran nor the Prophet can fairly be held responsible for their present-day seclusion. This custom in fact originated in the reign of the Caliph Omar, and was unknown in the early days of Islam. It is not of Arabian origin, but derived from the Far East. The Bedou women of this day do not veil their faces, though the practice is general in towns. As regards polygamy, which, though not enjoined, is permitted within certain limits by the Koran, it must be remembered that in the world as it then was, and even to-day in countries like Arabia, there is bound to be a great numerical preponderance of women over men, for the reason that the former are so much more exposed to the accidents of life—war principal among them. A monogamistic system would have involved a great hardship to this surplus of women and a very serious decline in the birth-rate—a matter of supreme importance to a community when death by violence is the most probable termination to a man's career. Such a system would have destroyed the whole social fabric of the day, and however excellent in principle was clearly impossible in practice.

Very much the same may be said of the institution of slavery. The most that could be done here was to regulate a necessary evil. The Koran abounds in injunctions that slaves are to be well treated and states that no act is more pleasing to God than their manumission. It must be remembered that Moslem ideas on certain points are based on a conception of human life totally different from our

own. The introduction to the "solemnization of matrimony," for example, represents a frame of mind quite inconceivable to them.

It is not fair to base charges of grossness and sensuality on certain passages in the Koran relating to the hereafter; and those who do so lose sight of the circumstances in which it was revealed or imagined. If the doctrine of heaven and hell is to be worth anything, if the hope of reward and the fear of punishment are to influence men's conduct, then the one must be depicted as blissful and the other terrible in terms which will be comprehended by those to whom it is intended to appeal. It is not wonderful that paradise should be presented to the inhabitants of Arabia as a land of shady trees, green meadows, and running water; nor that beautiful women should find a place in the Elysium promised to the race which, as the story goes, absorbed nine-tenths of the entire amount of erotic passion destined for the whole of mankind. A state of infinite peace and happiness in the contemplation of virtue apotheosized may be a philosophical conception of heaven, but can Mohammed's followers be blamed for wanting something a little more definite, and easy to understand? If we must persist in interpreting the words of the Koran as positive statements of fact rather than poetic imagery we must, to be just and logical, treat the Testaments in the same way. I once listened to a sermon in which the preacher described heaven as an eternal Sunday. There is no accounting for taste, but if this be so, I do not intend to go there; and feel no shame in avowedly preferring the paradise which, so the Prophet said, lies under the shadow of swords.

The fact that Moslem communities find religion an obstacle to their progress in civilization is not, as has been pointed out, entirely the fault of the former. It would

not be possible, as has been well said, to conduct Great Britain's foreign policy on lines consistent with a perfectly literal interpretation of the "sermon on the Mount." Yet every official act in Turkey has to be made to fit in somehow with a "sacred law" derived from the Koran and traditions which, like the law of the Medes and Persians, cannot alter. So far from a more liberal interpretation becoming gradually accepted, the opposite has occurred. A general prohibition against usury is now made to include the businesses of bankers and insurance companies. These very qualities of directness and invariability are a source of strength as well as weakness. Believers are told what to do and what not to do in terms which leave no room for misunderstanding and little to the imagination. Sentiment and emotionalism are conspicuously absent from the Koran; a spade is called a spade, and trivialities are brushed aside. A night spent in arms in a righteous cause or a kind action done to the poor or fatherless are worth in the sight of God, we are assured, months of prayer and fasting. This habit of literal acceptance causes Moslems to give practical effect to the dictum that the believers are brothers irrespective of race or colour, and explains the success and growing power of Islam in Africa to-day.

In the conclusion of the writer, religion has had very little to do with the development of the Near East for a long time past. Every country, it is said, gets the Government it deserves. Had the Turks in the days of their conquests and expansion adopted Christianity instead of Islam as their State religion, it is doubtful whether the Ottoman Empire of to-day would be better governed or more progressive than it actually is. Few people, at any rate, who have had opportunities for observing Christian and Moslem populations of the same race, living under

similiar conditions, would attempt to prove that it would *a posteriori*.

This introduction would be incomplete without a reference to the various movements for the reformation of Islam that have taken place subsequent to the death of its founder. It is remarkable that these have generally originated in Arabia itself. The force of the initial eruption soon expended itself. After the fall of the Bagdad Caliphs, the Arabs as a political force ceased to count. They became absorbed in the populations of the countries they had conquered or else returned to their nomad state. Arabia at the present time is very much as the Prophet knew it. Though most Bedou tribes profess Islam, they have little regard for its precepts or ceremonies.

Yet the most important of these revivals was originated by an Arab of Negd, Abd-ul-Wahab, in the middle of the eighteenth century. Disgusted by certain superstitious and idolatrous practices he had observed on the pilgrimage, he preached on his return to his own country a simpler and purer conception of the faith. This revival met with great success for a time. The "Wahabies" captured Mecca and Medina and destroyed Kerbela. They threatened the very existence of the Turkish Empire in the early part of last century, but were finally crushed by Mohammed Ali in 1817–19, in a campaign which is remarkable as being the only occasion on record when Central Arabia has been invaded in force. The "Senussi" *confrérie* represents another movement of the same nature which is receiving less attention than it deserves. The more celebrated "Mahdi" of the Sudan does not, however, fall in this category. A remarkable saying, recorded of the Prophet, is that Islam, after attaining great power, will gradually decline till it becomes little more than a name in the world,

but will eventually be regenerated by "The Mahdi," a sort of Moslem Messiah, who is to convert the whole world, and whose coming will herald its end. The Sudanese "Mahdi" claimed to be this Messiah, and requires to be distinguished from the various "Mullahs" and others who claim the title of "Mahdi," which merely means divinely guided, and without the definite article has no special significance.

Finally, an allusion is necessary to the religious societies of Islam. It would appear from the Koran and the traditions that all forms of monasticism or sacerdotalism are contrary to the spirit of the religion. These cults, known as Derweishes, bound by certain vows, and practising ceremonies of their own invention, are none the less very numerous in most Moslem countries. Their practices and beliefs are characterized in many cases by the grossest superstition, and the ridiculous antics of the dancing, howling, and other Derweish bands have nothing in common with the simple and dignified ritual prescribed by the Koran. Europeans, however, not conversant with the East, often find some difficulty in dissociating the two—a confusion of ideas not unnatural when we consider how easily a casual Moslem traveller in Southern Europe might be led to consider that belief in the evil eye formed part of the State religion.

PART I

CHAPTER I

LONDON TO BEYROUT

THE town of Mecca, as we have already seen, contains a temple which was an object of veneration in pre-Islamic days. In order to make clear how and why the Prophet came to substitute Islam for the old idolatrous religion without disturbing the sanctity of the Meccan shrine, we must re-edit a little Biblical history from a Moslem standpoint.

The temple known as the Kaaba (the word means a cube) was built, then, originally by Adam in the likeness of a house he had seen in paradise before the Fall. It was rebuilt after the Flood by Abraham and Ishmael, and reconsecrated to the service of the true God. The Arabs, however, in the course of centuries fell away from the true faith, and a polytheistic religion grew up which, while losing sight of the deity in honour of whom it was founded, continued to regard the Kaaba itself as an object of worship. Such was the state of affairs when Mohammed began his preaching, and the earlier revelations he received made Jerusalem the "Kibla," that is to say the most sacred spot on earth, towards which worshippers turn when praying. Later on, however, this direction was cancelled: Mecca was substituted for Jerusalem, and the Kaaba

pronounced to be the first and holiest of temples. A pilgrimage to it, once in a lifetime, was declared to be obligatory on every Moslem for whom the undertaking should be possible.[1]

Reasons of policy accounted for this "change of front," in the opinion of non-Moslem critics. The conversion of the Meccans themselves constituted, during the greater part of the Prophet's career as such, his principal immediate aim. Since the worldly prosperity of the Meccans depended then, as it does to-day, on the sanctity of their city, they were evidently more likely to listen to reason if the new religion they were invited to embrace left this undisturbed. Mohammed, by the above ingenious method, succeeded in actually enhancing it. His quarrel with the Jews also is believed to have influenced him in this matter.

Be the explanation what it may, the temple, the city, and even the surrounding country were proclaimed to be of so highly sanctified a character that no unbeliever should dare thenceforward to set foot in this sacred territory. It is not the least likely that the Prophet meant to exclude Jews and Christians, but then he was very much more broad-minded than any of his successors have been. His commands, however, were construed in that way, and, strange as it may seem, no instance is on record of any one having transgressed them openly and returned to tell the tale.

This prohibition against the intrusion of unbelievers has been extended to include Medina, which acquires its

[1] A certain period in every year was ordained for the observance of certain rites in and around Mecca, the due performance of which on the appointed days constitutes a Moslem's claim to be a Hagi or pilgrim.

special sanctity from the fact that the Prophet himself and many of his companions are buried there. Most Islamic sects set high value on a visit to this city, and the Sheia esteem one as being almost equal in merit to the pilgrimage itself.

It would be strange indeed if the exclusive character of these cities had not excited in Western Europe the liveliest curiosity concerning them. Before going further, let it be clearly understood that any one who wishes to visit them may do so, after publicly professing Islam. It would be necessary to go before a Kadhi, repeat certain formulæ and submit, in most cases, to one of the minor operations of surgery. This done, and a sufficiently long apprenticeship served to convince the local Moslem feeling that the convert's professions were sincere, there would be no objection to his making the pilgrimage. A long and drivelling correspondence between himself, the Foreign Office, and the Sublime Porte, would probably end in the last named having exhausted all possible pretexts for further delay, giving him a special passport. This once obtained, the Ottoman Government would be responsible for his welfare, and he would be enabled to travel to Mecca and Medina without running any special risk. He would probably be given an escort and otherwise looked after. He would generally be regarded as a legitimate object for curiosity, if not suspicion.

The only alternative to this unattractive prospect, if one wishes to see these places, is to go there in disguise.

The writer made the pilgrimage in the year 1908–9, partly out of curiosity, more particularly to accustom himself to Arab ways with a view to future journeys in disguise into the unexplored interior. The rank and reputation of a Hagi, that is to say, one who has duly performed

certain rites on the prescribed day at Mecca, is useful to the traveller in Moslem countries.

The following pages contain an account of the journey that I wrote on my return, and did not originally intend to publish. It shows that the Hedjaz is by no means the inaccessible country it is often supposed to be. Masaudi, I must explain, is a Mombasa Swahili whom I took to England on purpose to assist me in the enterprise, and Abdul Wahid is an Arab from Aleppo, established in Berlin, whom I " signed on " later.

The three of us foregathered at Marseilles on September 23, 1908. The pilgrimage was taking place that year at the beginning of January, but as I intended to go to Medina first to stay some time in both places, we were not starting too early. I also wanted to stay sufficiently long in Damascus to convince myself that my assumption of an Eastern character was effective, before entering the forbidden territory.

The first difficulty that confronted us was how to procure for Masaudi and myself the necessary passports. Abdul Wahid already had one, which only needed renewing. We adopted certain measures to overcome this difficulty, as a result of which I got a Turkish passport describing me as one Ali bin Mohammed, aged twenty-five, a subject of Zanzibar, on his way to Mecca. This document lately fell into the hands of the Turkish authorities, and there has been some trouble in consequence. I had better therefore confine myself to saying that the official who issued it to me did not realize that I was an Englishman, and that bribery played no part in the transaction.

The question of passports being disposed of thus satisfactorily, we were all anxious to get out of Marseilles as soon as possible. The hotel at which we were putting

up, though cheap—three francs per diem—was somewhat malodorous. We spent the afternoon in visiting the offices of various steamship companies, hoping to get second-class berths to either Egypt or Syria. This proved impossible, all the steamers being full up. The only accommodation available for the next fortnight was first-class P. and O., or third-class Messageries, neither of which suited us at all.

It then occurred to me that we might go on to Genoa, whence I knew that there were a number of lesser known steamship lines plying East, and where I thought we should run much less risk of being recognized, in case it was necessary to wait for any length of time. Moreover, I had never before been there. Having decided on this course, we lost little time in making our few arrangements, and left Marseilles at midnight. We got to Genoa at 4 p.m. next day, and found a cheap but by no means bad hotel on the road leading from the station. Indeed the only real objection to it was the unceasing noise of traffic rumbling over the paved streets, which prevented one from hearing a word that was said. In the course of the evening we visited all the steamship offices, and eventually took second-class berths in the *Falerno*, which was not starting for the next eight days, but was the first ship available. The prospect of so long a wait was by no means agreeable in the circumstances, but there was nothing else for it.

I will pass over the days we spent at Genoa. We ate, slept, read, and wandered about the town, and were very bored. The other people of the hotel were Italians, and most of them, I should say, commercial travellers. They were not inquisitive—which was the main thing.

We embarked on a Tuesday evening, and found the

Falerno to be a ship of some two thousand tons burthen, and of a distinctly shoddy appearance. There were six berths in our cabin, and a saloon which served all other purposes. On deck there was no accommodation at all for the second class, and precious little for the first. The first few days were tolerable, for we practically had the ship to ourselves, but after Naples every berth was filled. The people in our cabin were very sea-sick when it was rough, and very noisy when it wasn't. We took in all nine days to get to Alexandria. There were no English people on board, but I think nearly every other European nationality had a representative. We of course kept very much to ourselves and sat at the end of the table. I admitted to knowing a little French, and occasionally conversed in that language with a rather good-looking, and very well-dressed man, who told me he was an officer of the Khedive's household, and whom I strongly suspect to have been his valet.

We arrived at Alexandria late at night, but did not land till the following morning. We were taken at once to the passport office, where we produced our passports and had them duly "visé'd." We than passed on to the Customs shed. They asked if we had anything to declare, and we said we hadn't. I should explain that previous to coming ashore I had taken the precaution to pocket all the pistols and ammunition in our possession, as well as certain papers of a compromising nature, such as my English passport, cheque book, and so on. We also had in our luggage some watches and other things intended for presents later on, among them several of some value. These had been put in the pockets of the clothes to avoid breakage. There were also a medicine case, bandages, and various similar things. They made us open all the

boxes and turn out the contents, which they searched carefully, reading every paper, opening every book, and laying violent hands on everything they found of the slightest value. The first box being thus disposed of, we were told to repack it. Realizing, that after all this trouble with the boxes, they could not intend to neglect the contents of our pockets, Masaudi and I, while doing so, contrived to include the pistols, papers, and other things. In this way we managed to offload what we were carrying, but to communicate with Abdul Wahid was impossible, and I foresaw disaster imminent. Sure enough, our boxes having been gone through, we were herded into an inner apartment and searched. Masaudi and I were innocent enough of contraband articles, nothing more exciting coming to light than £200 in gold. Abdul Wahid, however, was made to disgorge pistols, ammunition, postcards, and jewellery in an apparently endless stream, all of which were pounced upon by the excited officials. After a consultation we were all arrested as suspicious characters, and put under a guard to await the arrival of the Mudir. That functionary when he eventually turned up two hours late decided that the case was too serious for him to deal with, and referred it to the Pasha. It being Ramadan the Pasha did not appear till about one o'clock, and when he did I saw at once that he was one of those people with whom fasting does not agree. He was in a bad temper. We were subjected to a searching cross-examination. The medicine case and instruments in particular came in for much undesirable attention. They could not imagine what we could want with such things. As luck would have it I had previously arranged with Abdul Wahid that in the event of any discussion he should lay claim to anything of this sort and conduct the conversation. To this foresight, and

our good luck in returning the documents unobserved, we owed our salvation. Abdul Wahid, being the principal offender, came in for most of the suspicion attaching to us collectively. No one took much notice of Masaudi and myself. But so far as his being a true Arab was concerned his *bona fides* was unquestionable, and he talked so much and so fast that he eventually tired them out. We were dismissed with a caution, all dutiable things being retained at the Customs House, to be given up when we sailed for Beyrout. So about 2.30 p.m. we emerged once more into the sunlight, very hungry and tired, but feeling that when all was said and done we had got distinctly the best of the encounter. I came in for the warmest congratulations from Abdul Wahid on having got rid of the documents in the manner I have described. He was of course unaware that I had done so, and when we were searched regarded discovery, with its attendant publicity, if no worse, as absolutely inevitable. When nothing at all was found on us his amazement was only equalled by his relief, and I felt that I had risen several degrees in his estimation from that day forward.

We asked the sentry at the gates to recommend us a cheap hotel suitable for persons of our description, which he did unhesitatingly. We found it to consist of a suite of rooms situated over a barber's shop, and when we came to inspect the interior I could not help thinking that the sentry had formed an undeservedly small opinion of us. However, it was certainly cheap (one franc per diem), and reasonably clean. After a furious row with the porters carrying our boxes, we eventually settled with them, got a change and some food, and refreshed ourselves by a short sleep. In the evening we repaired to the nearest Hamam (Turkish bath). I now took the precaution to

shave my head with a view to looking as "un-European" as possible, and dressed in Arab clothes, as also did the others. Hitherto we had been wearing our ordinary clothes, with the addition only of the tarboosh. I was pleased to find that our appearance seemed to excite no particular interest. During the few days we spent at Alexandria we were occasionally asked from what country we came—being obviously foreigners. Abdul Wahid usually said Bagdad, which did for all three of us; and when it was necessary to explain further Zanzibar satisfied the most curious.

The next day we took deck passages on a Khedivial Mail ship for Beyrout. The first available was starting in three days' time, but as the delay afforded me an opportunity to get accustomed to the new conditions of life, as well as to practise colloquial Egyptian Arabic, it was not unwelcome. The language question, which strikes most people as the greatest obstacle to travelling in disguise, is not really so formidable as it appears. In Arabic there are so many dialects, so widely divergent in their pronunciation and vocabulary, that peculiarities of either excite little attention. A man from the Yemen, for instance, does not readily understand two Egyptians talking together, though he may converse with them himself without difficulty; this is for the reason that strangers in conversation one with another can employ the more correct pronunciation and grammar more nearly approximating to that of the classical or written language, and can further avoid local slang and any particular variety of dialectical pronunciation that might make their speech difficult to understand. Then again, there are large numbers of people in all Eastern countries calling themselves Arabs who are really Persians, Kurds, Turks, etc., most of whom

are physically incapable of giving the true Bedoui[1] pronunciation to the various consonants characteristic of the Arabic language. This remark applies also to the Egyptians: a Cairo-born man can no more pronounce ض properly than if he came from Clapham Common.

I overcame all difficulty in the matter by the simple expedient of saying that in Zanzibar the colloquial language was Swahili and that no one talked Arabic—which is a fact. Among the people with whom I associated no one knew Swahili at all. I was able consequently to ask Masaudi's advice openly in any difficulty without the slightest fear of being understood, a facility of which I often availed myself. I was careful always to talk to him very fast, so as to give the impression that I was speaking my native language. On the few occasions that I had to speak Swahili to natives of those parts, I merely inverted the statement and told them that having been born in Muscat my real language was Arabic. I never found any one sufficiently well acquainted with both languages to find me out, and of course I was at pains to avoid the society of any one who was likely to be able to do so. Burton I believe employed very much the same device on his journey. It is in fact the obvious thing to do.

We left Alexandria on a Wednesday, sailing about four o'clock in the afternoon. At two o'clock we went down to the Customs House and recovered our things. We were then taken to the police station, where our passports were again inspected, and our countenances subjected to a careful scrutiny to see if they resembled any of the criminals

[1] In this and other similar words the termination "i" indicates the singular or the adjective. The plural is "Bedou." I have taken no account of the feminine singular "Bedouwiyah," which also serves for the adjectival plural.

whose photographs were pasted over the walls. Having satisfied themselves on this point, the police passed us on to the quarantine office, where our luggage was again opened, but as it contained nothing of the nature of dirty clothes we were excused fumigation and introduced forthwith to another room to await the doctor who was to examine our persons. The examination was quite farcical. We were made to stand in a line down which the doctor walked prodding us under the arms—after which ceremony we were released and allowed to go on board. The idea is to discover the glandular swellings which are the characteristic symptom of plague; but of course a case sufficiently advanced to be detected by such means would scarcely be in a state to start on a journey, so that I cannot see that these formalities serve any good purpose. The inspection, if really necessary, should at least be thorough and include temperature-taking, which alone can be relied on to afford indication of incipient cases. As carried out at present the quarantine regulations in this part of the East are merely vexatious.

The steamer was one of the largest of the line, over 5,000 tons, if I remember rightly. She was very crowded—on deck at least. We were located in the after part of the ship and were apparently very late in arriving, as all the best places had already been taken. After considerable squabbling we succeeded in planting our carpet on top of a large chest fixed to the port bulwark, which seemed to me a peculiarly advantageous position, being clean, and well above the crowd. The objection to it we discovered shortly after starting, when it was too late to change. It was in fact the ice chest, and throughout the voyage, whenever the cook wanted anything out of it, we had to

our own extreme annoyance and the amusement of our fellow-passengers. This happened on the average ten times a day. That evening the boatswain, a Turk, offered us his cabin for the sum of £2. We said ten shillings and finally compromised for a louis. This cabin, which contained two wooden bunks, was placed directly over the rudder. It afforded us some welcome privacy, and shelter in bad weather, but it was almost impossible to sleep there owing to the heat and stuffy atmosphere, to say nothing of the size and ferocity of the fleas that infested it. The other passengers were a medley of all races and colours—Greeks, Italians, Egyptians, Arabs from the West, Syrians, and Turks—all crowded together on deck so that it was almost impossible to walk without treading on some one. Companions in misfortune—for the sea was rough and they were mostly bad sailors—they were not disposed to be quarrelsome, which was just as well. By no means all of them were poor people. Many no doubt were better able to afford a first-class fare than some of those travelling that way. Moslems prefer as a rule to travel on deck, on account of the food question. This always presents a difficulty to the more old-fashioned, since according to the letter of the law meat is only fit for food when the animal has been slaughtered in a certain way and by a Mussulman. In Mohammedan countries meat lawfully killed receives a Government stamp, which must be shown to the customer on demand. Moreover they are deterred from eating European food by the fear that pork of some kind is used in its preparation. Of course their rules, if faithfully observed, would prevent a Mussulman travelling in Europe at all. It is generally considered, however, that the avoidance of anything known to contain swine-flesh complies sufficiently with the spirit of the law.

We reached Port Said the following morning, and spent the day ashore—which illustrates the absurdity of the quarantine laws. Any one could have gone aboard there who pleased, simply by saying that he had come from Alexandria. Port Said is not a pleasant place at any time, but never before have I disliked it so much. We were thankful to get off again. The next morning we arrived at Jaffa—the port of Jerusalem. Here a good many passengers disembarked and more came aboard. The roadstead is open, and in the rough weather we were experiencing there was sufficient sea to make landing in boats difficult. Having now reached Turkish territory, we were once more quarantined. A disinfecting engine was brought aboard and we were told to strip, in order that our clothes might be disinfected and ourselves examined. Here I drew the line, and for a dollar bribed one of the officials to let us off. He took it so readily that I knew at once I was overpaying him. We got a ticket to certify that we had been "done," and passed along to the doctor who was in a saloon at the other end of the ship, to get our landing certificate for Beyrout. We were thus enabled to enjoy the spectacle of the fumigation of the other passengers, which we certainly should not have done had we been waiting our own turn. Their language as the clothes were handed back wringing wet, and in the case of coloured things often quite ruined, was worth hearing. Having finished spoiling the clothes they proceeded to squirt the remainder of the fluid over the ship at random, thereby giving rise to more blasphemy on the part of people who happened to get it in their eyes. When as much general inconvenience as possible had been thus occasioned, the quarantine launch sailed away and we were allowed to proceed.

The wind had been rising all day, and with it the sea. We reached Haifa at nightfall, and stayed an hour. On leaving the sheltered bay near Mount Carmel we got into very rough water. Several heavy seas broke on board, and our position on the ice chest becoming too precarious, Masaudi and I took refuge in our cabin; but Abdul Wahid, who had long passed the stage where drowning possesses any terrors, refused to shift. Not wishing, however, to lose him in this manner, we hauled him and his belongings off, and deposited him in the weather scuppers, which, though now well awash, yet seemed the safest and driest place left. The state of the decks was unpleasant, and I congratulated myself on having taken the cabin. After a night which was uncomfortable for us but must have been ten times more so for those on deck, we reached calmer water, and entered Beyrout harbour about sunrise.

It was here that I was chiefly apprehensive of trouble with the authorities, for I had always understood that in Turkey they were very cautious about admitting strangers without the surest credentials. I was quite prepared for many inconvenient questions about ourselves, and thought it by no means unlikely that we should be detained for a time. We had therefore made somewhat elaborate preparations for all such eventualities, and were thoroughly primed as to the answers we should give to almost any conceivable inquiry. Should my medicine chest for instance give rise to suspicion, Abdul Wahid was to say that his brother, who was a doctor in Bagdad, had asked him to buy it for him in Europe—which we thought would account for the former's ignorance of the contents and their uses. In this way we hoped to avoid a repetition of the trouble which had so nearly landed us in disaster at Alexandria.

As a matter of fact our precautions were unnecessary. On landing we were shown into a small office where a man in uniform " visé'd " our passports after a bare glance at their contents. He displayed some slight interest in my sword, a Muscat weapon of somewhat peculiar pattern, but after making a few playful passes at the office table he handed it back without comment. We went on to the Customs, where they made us open our boxes without even asking if we had anything to declare. After a cursory inspection they asked about our firearms, which we produced. On hearing that we were pilgrims they offered no objection to our bringing them in, though we had to pay a trifling duty.

While awaiting the completion of these formalities I had leisure to observe the method of procedure in the case of the other passengers, and saw that they were not all escaping so lightly. Some of the European travellers seemed to be undergoing much the same sort of ordeal that we had been subjected to at Alexandria. I believe that the new era of liberty which was then supposed to be dawning for Turkey had something to do with the relaxation in our own case of the police inquisition which was formerly so troublesome. Be the explanation what it may, we ourselves passed without difficulty, and found ourselves at last in Turkish territory and free to go where we would.

For two francs a night we got two large clean rooms in a hotel, if it may so be called, for food was not obtainable on the premises. We spent the day in wandering about the town, making a few necessary purchases. Beyrout is interesting in its way, and more Eastern in character than any place I have visited in Egypt, though far less so than Damascus. The population consists very largely of

Christians and Jews. I would have liked to spend several days here, but for various reasons we decided to go on to Damascus. We were all very thankful to have no more travelling by sea ahead of us (as we then thought), and were rather elated at the success which had thus far attended us. After the evening meal we sat outside a café in the principal square of the town, smoked, drank coffee, and chatted with various people. As we had to start at daybreak the next morning we turned in early.

CHAPTER II

DAMASCUS

THE scenery of the Lebanon range has often been described. Especially beautiful is the view over the Mediterranean from the summit.

We travelled third class and formed a party of eight—the others being Syrian merchants of Damascus. They kept up a ceaseless flow of conversation on every imaginable subject, much of which was lost on me, as I found considerable difficulty in understanding them. We were consoled for the heat and discomfort by the beautiful figs and grapes obtainable at nearly every station, and we ate of them far more than was good for us. The first-class carriages, from what I saw of them, seemed fairly comfortable and almost empty. It seems to be an Eastern peculiarity to economize when travelling. Personally, I have always thought that at no other time does one get such good value for money. It has been said that the enjoyment of wealth consists in its power to raise a golden screen between its possessor and the minor unpleasantnesses of life; on a journey, at any rate, it does in some measure succeed in doing so. But I have never met the Oriental who did not regard the bare suggestion of paying a first-class fare or hiring an extra camel with pious horror, though he will readily spend ten times as much on something quite unnecessary which happens to take his fancy.

Damascus is one of the most populous and beautiful cities of the East. It contains miles of covered markets of typically Oriental character. There are said to be a thousand mosques and seventy Turkish baths, though I guarantee neither statement to be correct. The town and surrounding countryside are intersected by numerous running streams, while on the outskirts of the city are gardens and cultivation extending for a great distance. Fruit and flowers of all kinds attain great perfection, and the dry calm atmosphere must be very healthy. In summer, though the days are hot, the nights are cool—never sufficiently warm to make sleeping on the roof advisable, as is the custom in Bagdad and the Arabian cities. In winter there is sometimes a heavy snowfall—hence the covered markets. The principal building is the great mosque which stands in the centre of the town and is, I believe, the largest in the world. Prior to the Moslem conquest of Syria it was a church. In the matter of monuments Damascus is rather disappointing and does not compare with Cairo. There are but few of interest, and the general aspect of the houses is mean, though the markets, where most of the merchants live and do business, have a character of their own.

As is usual in the East the town is divided up into the Mohammedan, Jewish, and Christian quarters—the first of course being much the largest and richest. There is one tolerably decent hotel, where Europeans usually stay, and many hostelries for visitors of Eastern race. In one of the latter we installed ourselves, taking one large room. This hotel had been recommended to us by one of our companions in the train, but as it was by no means the best of its sort and rather expensive, we afterwards changed. We took our meals at various

cafés. Food is seldom obtainable at hotels in these places.

It was now the twentieth day of Ramadan,[1] and as we did not propose to start for Medina for about another month, it was worth while making ourselves comfortable. I felt that in view of what was before us the time was none too long for me to get at home with Eastern life to the extent necessary. It was essential that I should have at my fingers' ends certain phrases, quotations, and greetings, with the appropriate answers to them; that I should be able to go through the various Moslem ceremonies, in and out of the mosque, without making mistakes, and get so far accustomed to wearing and arranging my clothes, and doing other things in the conventional way, that I should not in any ordinary circumstances be conspicuous. It is these multifarious customs and ceremonies that constitute the real obstacle to a European passing himself off as a Mussulman born and bred—for they are common to Islam the world over, and a bad mistake would emphatically give him away. No matter how Eastern his appearance might be, how carefully he might be dressed, and how adept in the language, if after taking a bath some one said to him "Naiman" and he did not know the answer, he would stamp himself for an "Effrengi" as surely as if he walked down the "street that is called strait" in a sun helmet and a spine pad. A bad mistake when praying, visiting a tomb, or even in the responses during a service, might easily be fatal. In fact to pass successfully for any length of time, constant watch-

[1] Generally written, and sometimes pronounced, "Ramazan." The "d" represents the Arabic letter ض the pronunciation of which is something like "dhw." The emphasis falls on the last syllable, which is long: thus, "Ramadán."

fulness as well as previous practice is essential. It is in these matters, and not in the language or disguise, that the real difficulty is experienced. There are nearly as many white men at Mecca as there are men black or brown in colour. Syrian "Arabs" not infrequently have fair hair and blue eyes—as likewise have some of the natives of the holy cities themselves. I was once asked what colour I stained myself for this journey. The question reveals the curious ignorance that lies at the bottom of the so-called race prejudices of which some people are so proud. You might as well black yourself all over to play Hamlet.

It must not be concluded, however, that to travel successfully in disguise it is necessary to be a good actor. The main thing is to keep one's eyes open and one's mouth shut. It is wonderful how easy it is to acquire foreign habits when one is really living in their atmosphere. The secret, I believe, is in playing a part as little as possible consciously, and in trying to identify one's self as closely as may be with the assumed character, in private as well as in public.

It is not practicable to shut one's self up and avoid speaking to any one. If travelling as a respectable person, well dressed, and accompanied by servants, it is impossible to avoid meeting and knowing people, and to some extent accepting and returning hospitality. It is better to seek this at the outset, after, of course, as much private study as possible, in order more quickly to become accustomed to social conditions. I myself have been much assisted by being naturally very shy with a lot of people—which requires no acting at all, and is quite evidently unassumed. This has enabled me to observe much and say little, and no doubt has accounted for those gaucheries of which I must so often have been guilty.

If the object be simply to visit Mecca, or any other place, in secret, I should say the simplest way of doing it would be to go disguised as a pauper—with £5 in one's pocket, some dirty clothes, and nothing more. If however the expedition is to last any length of time the objections to this are sufficiently obvious, and so far as many interesting sides of life in the country are concerned, the traveller would return very little wiser than he started. Most people would prefer to amuse themselves some other way.

I often congratulated myself on having chosen Damascus for our preliminary sojourn and not Egypt. The chances of detection would be much greater there. The people are more inquisitive and more conversant with the appearance and manners of Europeans than they are in Asia Minor. Also, as they are dark in colour, I should have always appeared a stranger among them, whereas in Damascus, when wearing the local costume as I sometimes did, there was nothing to distinguish me from the people of the country. Sometimes I was mistaken for a "Medanie," *i. e.* a native of Medina, a great many of whom, since the completion of the railway, visit Damascus, especially at this season—shortly before the pilgrimage.

As we were now no longer travelling, there remained no excuse for not fasting. This fast of Ramadan is one of the four positive duties of Islam incumbent on all believers. The sacred law however provides numerous exemptions. You are excused when travelling or engaged in war, and actually forbidden to fast if ill. The Prophet had no sympathy with asceticism. So far as my own observation has extended, this fast is very strictly kept. I am told that in European Turkey there is an increasing laxity observable, but certainly in the places we visited, in public at any rate, it was not disregarded.

We were of course very careful to avoid giving cause for suspicion by failing to fulfil strictly the religious observances behoving us. Abdul Wahid, it is true, used to gorge himself with macaroons in the privacy of our room undeterred by all we said on the subject, which was a good deal. Even passages from the religious works I was then studying, relating to the fate of those who thus defied the law, more especially of those hypocrites who did so secretly, did not avail to bring him to a better frame of mind. The more we talked of hell and damnation the more he seemed to enjoy the macaroons.

I did not find fasting any particular hardship: not being able to smoke was certainly the chief privation, but as one can do what one likes after sundown, and I used to sleep well into the day, even that did not amount to much. Our routine was somewhat as follows. We awoke about half-past nine, performed our ablutions in the prescribed manner, and read the paper or books till about eleven; then we usually went out. After wandering about the markets for an hour or so we would repair to the great mosque to await the noonday prayer. Masaudi and I, Abdul Wahid having gone off to his lunch, generally remained in the mosque reading or listening to lectures till the afternoon prayer at 3.30. This concluded, we walked back to our hotel, making purchases on the way—cakes, fruit, and so forth—which were to form our "breakfast." Sundown, which begins the day by Mohammedan reckoning, is saluted during this month by a salvo of artillery. After praying the evening prayer, which takes a couple of minutes, the believer can "start in," and usually does. Having taken the edge off our appetites, we would smoke a shisha (water pipe) outside a café, then, a couple of hours later, go to some restaurant for a more substantia

meal—then more coffee and pipes, and later on a Turkish bath. Sometimes we went to entertainments of the Café Chantant type; otherwise there were always plenty of bands to listen to—or we might go to some of the quieter cafés, where story-tellers or reading afforded more sober distractions. About one o'clock, or a little later, we had another meal, eating as much as possible, not because we wanted it but to see us through the ensuing day. Just before dawn a gun is fired as a warning, and another a few minutes later which announces that the fast has begun again.

Business in Damascus goes on as usual during Ramadan. In summer, when the days are long and hot, the deprivation of water must cause some suffering amongst the workpeople, but I believe that a great many who have not manual labour to do rather enjoy this month and are sorry when it is over. There is more going on at night for one thing, and it is a season when special luxuries are cooked in most houses, and various delicacies sold in shops not to be found at other times. Then again every one feels that he has a right to be extravagant.

The day after our arrival we presented to a local merchant a letter of introduction that Abdul Wahid had brought from England. We found his office in one of the principal bazaars, his business being of the wholesale description. On reading the letter he welcomed as warmly, inquired about ourselves and our intentions, and offered us any assistance he could render. We remained about half an hour conversing with him, then, hearing that we wanted to buy a few things, he accompanied us to several shops and introduced us to their proprietors. So numerous and crowded are these bazaars that it is by no means easy to find one's way at first. As is customary in the East each

description of trade has its own market or street. There is for instance a silk market, a saddle market, a horse market, and so on. Some of the larger ones consist of more than one street and contain perhaps a hundred shops. Nothing has a fixed price—it is nearly always necessary to bargain. Generally the first offer comes from the customer. Abdul Wahid proved himself a great adept at this. While never giving a farthing more than absolutely necessary, he always managed to keep the other man in a good temper. So independent are these people that at the slightest hint of unpleasantness they will simply tell you to go away and buy your things somewhere else. Very different are they in this respect from Indian traders—of whom there are very few in Damascus. The latter, rather than lose a customer, will put up with all sorts of abuse, as likewise will the Jews. A fearful waste of time is engendered by this method of doing business, but it seems absolutely engrained in the people and part of the life of the community, though all admit its absurdity and inconvenience.

The mosques of Damascus, principal among them the Ommaya, have been described so often in their historical and architectural aspects that I will confine myself to describing the purposes for which they are actually used. The idea that a mosque is merely a Mohammedan church requires modification.

It will have been gathered from much of the foregoing that Islam is as much a society, as a religion in the common acceptation of the term. There are certain rules binding on its members, as in Freemasonry. Once admitted, none may leave on pain of death. There are certain peculiarities of dress, certain salutations, and distinctive habits, by which members may know each other. Similarly the

mosque is less comparable to a church than to a Masonic temple. It is not considered improper to eat or sleep in it, talk on secular subjects, or read any books or papers whatsoever. It serves equally as a refuge for homeless strangers, and a meeting-place for the people of the town; while affording peace and quietness at any time for those desiring it, as the utmost decorum is generally observed. Prayers take place five times daily, at the appropriate hours; which are dawn, noonday, afternoon, sunset, and some two hours after, when it has become quite dark. These prayers are led by an Imam, appointed for the purpose, or by any one who happens to be there, usually one of the elder men of the congregation. In large mosques there are generally half-a-dozen Imams of different sects, and several sets of prayers take place as sufficient people assemble. There is no furniture in a mosque—only carpets and prayer-mats, and a tank or fountain in the courtyard for ablutions. Women usually have a small mosque of their own built on to the larger one: at Medina a portion is railed off for their exclusive use; but at Mecca they pray with the men, occupying one whole side of the quadrangle. Mosques, though of many different designs, are all alike in one way; they are built with their greatest length at right angles to the direction of Mecca or "Kibla," the only exception being the great mosque at Mecca itself.

It is by no means necessary to go to the mosque to pray, but it is considered more blessed when two or three are gathered together. This may be outside a café, in the anteroom of the hamam, on the march, in camp, or anywhere. Those present appoint an Imam, and assembling in a line behind him, follow him in his prostrations and bows. The Imam repeats the prayers aloud in the morning and evening, at other times to himself. I myself have

been several times made "Imam" when the hour of prayer has arrived and no one else looking more worthy of the office has been available.

The Muadhin,[1] often a blind man, calls the faithful to prayer at the appointed times from the minaret of the mosque. In a large city with many mosques this sound is strangely impressive—especially at dawn. The man employed in looking after the books in the mosque and keeping it clean acts as Muadhin in the absence of any one specially appointed.

Every Friday there is a special service at noon, and also on certain festivals in the morning. At the Friday service a sort of sermon is given by a learned man appointed for the purpose. This, which comes after the prayer, is delivered from a pulpit facing the congregation, known as the "Mimba." The address is the same everywhere for the particular month: it is composed in Mecca and sent out from there to all parts of the Mohammedan world. After this exhortation comes a long prayer for the success of Islam, the conversion of the heathen, etc. It includes a supplication for the long life and health of the "Commander of the Faithful"—at the time we are speaking of, Abdul Hamid. This, of course, is omitted in Sheia mosques, since they do not recognize the Ottoman Sultan as such.[2]

A rukka consists in a recitation of the first sura[3] of the Koran (which corresponds more or less to the Christian's "Lord's Prayer") followed by another sura, usually one of the short ones at the end. Then comes, in the bowing

[1] The "dh" is reduplicated and bears the emphasis thus: "muadhdhin." Often appears as "Muezzin."

[2] N.B.—All descriptions of religious ceremonies apply to the Shafei sect more especially.

[3] Sura = chapter.

position, an acknowledgment of God's greatness, and the rukka is concluded in the sitting position, by invoking a blessing on the Prophet and Islam generally, with certain other supplications. The prayers consist of a certain number of these rukkas,[1] the greatest number being four and the least two. At the end comes the telling of beads, of which most people carry a rosary containing ninety-nine, one for each name or attribute of the Deity, after which, holding the hands palm upwards, the Moslem may say his private prayers in his own language. A four-rukka prayer takes about eight minutes, or even more when praying with an Imam. These five daily prayers are, strictly speaking, compulsory. It is not, however, absolutely necessary to pray at the hours ordained. If otherwise engaged, prayer may be postponed till it is convenient. Most people pray when they get up, at noon, in the evening, which they combine with the afternoon, and again before going to bed.

Ablutions are of two kinds, according to the state of impurity contracted. The greater necessitates total immersion, the lesser the washing of hands, feet, and face—this latter is generally necessary before prayer, and may be performed in the mosque, which nearly always contains a tank for the purpose.

All these religious performances play so large a part in Oriental (Mohammedan) life that a somewhat full description of them is really unavoidable.

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The remainder of Ramadan passed uneventfully in the manner I have been describing. On the last day, however, a tumult arose in the town which might have had serious consequences. The story of this is worth

[1] Rukka = bow.

relating, for it throws a sidelight on the character of the people and their government.

The cause of the disturbance was absurdly trivial. A man belonging to the heretical Wahabi sect was in the great mosque while some people were visiting the tomb of the prophet Yah-Yah, who is supposed to be buried there. These "visitations" consist in standing in front of the vault and reciting a long salutation to the deceased. By the Wahabies they are held to be idolatrous. This man started to declaim against the custom, and attracted a considerable audience, one of whom, a Meccan Arab, and a well-known "Aalim" or learned man, put an end to the sermon by hitting the preacher on the head. The Governor of Damascus, who happened to be in the mosque at the time, observing these highly indecorous proceedings, ordered the arrest of the Aalim without troubling to make inquiries. Nothing further happened till evening, when a crowd began to collect in front of the Government offices, which were opposite our hotel, and overlooked the big square. This was in consequence of the afternoon's *émeute*, and the object was to procure the release of the prisoner, on behalf of whom there was much public sympathy. When first the crowd began to assemble, we were under the impression that the new moon had been sighted, which means the end of the fast, and is always an occasion for great rejoicing. Masaudi was ill in bed, but Abdul Wahid and I at once sallied forth to see what might be going on, and so got mixed up in the crowd just as the row began. The mob broke open the door and rushed the building, from the balcony of which a stump orator proceeded to address them. The arrival of several companies of infantry put an end to his speech. The buildings were retaken and the intruders driven out. Attempts were

made to disperse the crowd, which continually increased. Reinforcements coming up charged with fixed bayonets, using, however, the butts of their rifles only. The people retaliated with sticks, stones, and anything else that came handy. Several were injured, but no one, so far as I know, seriously. The troops threatened to fire; but fortunately for us, refrained. At midnight, the whole place being in an uproar, the governor gave way, weakly I thought, and released the prisoner, who was carried home in triumph, amid general enthusiasm. We had got rather roughly handled during the scuffle, in which we had been unable to avoid taking part. Early in the proceedings I got a crack on the left shoulder with the business end of a rifle that was extremely painful at the time.

Walking home, we stopped to listen to an elderly Turkish officer who was addressing a small group of townspeople. "If," he said, "this is your idea of liberty, I warn you the constitution cannot last, and we shall lose what we have been at so much pains to get. Before the day of freedom you would never have dared to behave in this way, and to do so now is to show the whole world that this country is unsuited for free institutions." He went on to point out that the man would have been released the following morning, or in any case as soon as the true story of what happened in the mosque was made known to the authorities.

We heard a great deal about freedom in Damascus. At that time enthusiasm for the new regime was at its height, and my own reactionary views met with no sympathy whatever. The trouble in the Balkans was the cause of much indignation against Austria. A boycott of all Austrian goods was suggested, and in Constantinople was actually carried out. It is my own opinion

that elective institutions will never be successful for long in the East, where the character of the people necessitates a strong ruler, who does not owe his position to their caprice.

The end of Ramadan is celebrated by much expenditure of gunpowder and other marks of rejoicing. Every one who can afford to do so wears new clothes. The markets are closed and the town presents the usual bank holiday appearance. The dress of the Syrians is not so picturesque as elsewhere in the East. Most of them wear very wide cotton trousers, a shirt reaching to their knees, and a coloured silk gown which opens in front and folds across. Over this, in cold weather, some wear a long coat of European cut, others the "jubba," a typical Arab garment, rather like a dressing-gown, of any material and colour. On their heads they wear a tarboosh (fez) with a silk cloth wound round it. Strangers usually dress as in their own country, which gives a gayer appearance to the streets—especially near the time of the pilgrimage, when there are many foreigners visiting the city prior to going on to Medina. We found the clothes we had brought too chilly for this climate, and so to some extent adopted the local costume, only that Abdul Wahid would not let me wear a tarboosh, fearing that I should be mistaken for a Turk—which for various reasons he considered undesirable. I therefore wore a turban and black jubba, and was hence generally credited with coming from the Hedjaz.

On the day of the festival we visited our friend the merchant, Abdullah Waridee, in his house, which was situated in the suburbs, and had a very nice little garden with fountains. The reception-room in Oriental houses is generally a long passage-like apartment, terminating in a raised platform furnished with cushions, on which

the master of the house and his guests squat while the retainers stand or sit in the lower portion near the door. We were most hospitably entertained, and stayed, as is customary, for several hours. He returned our call the following day, and thenceforward we became very friendly.

On the second day of the festival we witnessed the departure of the mahmal for Mecca. Prior to the completion of the railway the pilgrim caravan used to start at this date. The journey to Medina took forty days, and meant hardship even to the rich, while the poor people who travelled on foot had a very rough time. The mahmal is an elaborately embroidered camel-litter which, along with other presents from the city, is sent annually to the shrines as a mark of respect. A similar mahmal is sent from Egypt, and formerly there was one from Bagdad also, though of late years this has been discontinued for some reason. A great crowd assembles to see the mahmal off, and it is escorted for some distance by the governor and principal dignitaries *en grande tenue*. The camel that has the honour of carrying it is of great size, and, I believe, of the highest breeding.

A few days after this we made the acquaintance of two brothers, students of Sacred Law at the College of Kerbela, who were going on the pilgrimage. They were rather pleased to meet us, as they knew no one in Damascus, and we went about a good deal together during the rest of our stay. We stood them a dinner and music-hall, and they drove us out to the mosque where Zeinab, the Prophet's daughter, is supposed (erroneously, I believe) to be buried. The drive was pleasant and gave us a good idea of the extraordinary fertility of the country. Arrived at the mosque, which is quite modern, we performed the proper visitation, which was recited by the

elder of the two, Sheikh Hassan by name, who had a very good voice. Then, as there was no one else present, we sat in the mosque and smoked cigarettes, which, by the way, was very wrong of us. We then carved our names on the outside—an abominable practice to which Arabs are peculiarly addicted.

That evening we dined with them at a house they had taken for their stay in Damascus—in which matter I often wished that we had followed their example, instead of going to hotels. It is quite an error to suppose that Eastern food is unpleasant to a European palate, or that it takes long to get accustomed to it. I found it excellent, as a rule—the only fault being that it is generally rather too highly spiced. But then, being more or less teetotallers, Orientals are not much troubled with "liver."

We had intended to travel together to Medina, but this fell through, owing to Sheikh Hassan falling in love. The object of his affections was the daughter of a local merchant, with whom he at once began negotiations, which there was little prospect of concluding before the pilgrimage, and so they decided to postpone the latter. I was surprised that his brother put up with this nonsense, and said as much; however, they were quite decided, and I daresay there was more in it than we ever heard of to account for their sudden change of plan.

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About this time we were compelled to change our hotel, as the one we were in was to be pulled down. We moved into another, but only stayed one night, for good and sufficient reasons. I still want to scratch when I think of it. Our third venture was more successful, though we had to pay slightly more than I had intended. The room we got was however fairly comfortable and quite clean.

It was while staying here that we nearly got let in for a most undesirable addition to the party. Abdul Wahid one day was accosted on the stairs by a middle-aged woman who told him she had come from Aleppo with her two daughters, and was on the pilgrimage. They were occupying the room below our own in the hotel, and had heard that we were likewise bound for the Hedjaz. As they had no man with them—might they travel with us as far as Medina? Abdul Wahid was, I am sorry to say, sufficiently unscrupulous to say that he would be delighted, but as a matter of form he would have to consult me first. His heart failing him, however, he said nothing to me about it. The next day I was caught in the same way and, panic-stricken, said exactly the same thing about him. "Oh," she said, "your friend is quite willing, he told us so. He is only waiting for your consent." I escaped upstairs and sternly commanded Abdul Wahid to go down at once and get us out of it somehow. I reminded him of what had happened to Ananias and assured him that if he tried to shovel it on to me again that person's fate would be enviable compared to his own unpleasant end. Masaudi also expressed astonishment at his hardihood. Abdul Wahid accordingly descended in some trepidation whilst we tip-toed to the edge of the bannisters to hear what he would say. He began by expressing great regret that he would be deprived of the pleasure to which he had so much looked forward, but, alas! there was a third member of the party, a very learned and holy man, who could not bring himself to travel with women except those belonging to his own household. This was received with yells of laughter, from which I gathered that they had already seen Masaudi and tumbled to the true state of the case.

Abdul Wahid returned discomfited to confront Masaudi, who in turn was now very angry. We finally agreed that neither honesty nor common decency could reasonably be expected from a man who gorged himself with sweets in Ramadan. The next time we met the ladies Masaudi told them that Abdul Wahid's reputation was so bad that it was as much as any woman's character was worth to be seen talking to him.

As a matter of fact we were in no position to help them, much as we might have liked to do so. Nor would it have been fair to risk involving them in the disaster which must ensue should I be discovered. But I fear our refusal seemed to them rather unkind.

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The time for our departure was now drawing near, and we began to make preparations for the journey. We bought the "Ihram" or white robes that we should require when entering Mecca and during the three days of the actual pilgrimage. We also bought the tent, mats, and saddle-bags which would constitute our camp equipment, knives, forks, plates, and what cooking utensils we required; not forgetting water pipes and a good supply of tea and tobacco. These things can be bought much more cheaply in Damascus than in Medina. I deposited my money, now reduced to £200, with our friend Abdullah, who gave me two cheques, one on his agent at Medina, the other on Mecca. In neither place are there any banks.

We had intended to start on the fifteenth of the month, but had to postpone our departure till the eighteenth owing to the trains being full up with troops sent to reinforce the garrison at Medina, which was reported to be hard pressed. Trouble that had arisen with the Bedou tribes during the Ramadan festival had swelled into a

respectable war. Wild and improbable rumours about the desperate nature of the fighting were daily circulating in the town; but as the papers were not allowed to give details, even if they knew any, and the officials were not communicative, it was difficult to get at the truth. All that seemed certain was that the Government troops had sustained a considerable defeat at the outset, and that the city was in a state of siege. This was good news for me, because I felt sure that it would make my journey easier in many ways. In time of war and commotion, when people have much to occupy their minds, they are less apt to be inquisitive. Moreover, I am never averse to being where anything interesting is taking place, and consequently I was all anxiety to be off to the scene of action.

CHAPTER III

THE HEDJAZ RAILWAY

THE Hedjaz railway station is situated on the eastern side of the town some little distance out. It took us over an hour to drive there from our hotel. The train was due to start at eleven in the morning—European time—but we were warned not to be later than nine, as it was expected to be very crowded. There are two classes, first and third. Seeing that the journey was to take four days at the least, and we were fairly affluent, I was strongly tempted to travel first class, especially as the difference did not amount to very much. Our Damascus friends however strongly opposed this extravagance. They said that even the "very best people" went third, and that it was nearly as comfortable. I gave up the idea when I found that it would probably involve their putting on a special carriage for me, for I naturally wished to make myself as inconspicuous as possible on arriving. I was thankful afterwards that I allowed myself to be persuaded. Our entry into Medina was quite sufficiently sensational as it was.

We got to the station in good time and secured our places, which we left Masaudi to guard while we took the tickets and registered the luggage. The tickets cost £3 10*s.* each, not a great deal for a journey of over a thousand miles. As we had still two hours and a half to wait, we

adjourned to a small café, with our friend Abdullah, who had come to see us off. Later I walked back with him some distance towards the town, which opportunity he took to bestow upon me some excellent advice. "Remember," he said, "that the people of the Hedjaz are not civilized as they are here, and do not quarrel, or you will get into trouble. They are accustomed to make money out of the pilgrims, so do not be cheated, yet do not accuse them lightly of trying to rob you. Do not spend too much money at the beginning, as you may want it all. If you are attacked in the train, or with the caravan, by overwhelming numbers, do not try to fight; give up your things quietly, and no harm will befall you." He further admonished me to be punctual in the performance of prayer while on the pilgrimage, whatever I might be at other times, and to give some small sum in charity before starting. I further had to promise to pray a prayer of two rukkas on his behalf in the Prophet's mosque at Medina. At parting he embraced me affectionately in the objectionable manner customary everywhere but in England.

On returning to the train I found all confusion. The carriages consisted of plain wooden benches with a passage down the middle. These were in pairs facing one another with just room for two to sit on each. We had reserved four of them, but other passengers turning up had forcibly removed our things from two in spite of Masaudi's protests. Our carriage was now absolutely crammed, as likewise were all the others. There was no room for anything, and we were jammed up together with our belongings in a most uncomfortable way. Although we had still an hour to wait, we did not dare to leave again, and sat in our places waiting for the train to start. As it was, many people arriving late were turned away for want of room.

When, much to our relief, we did start, we were half an hour late.

Among those in our compartment were several Turkish officers in uniform, some Syrian pilgrims, and some very dirty Moroccans. Next to us on the other side of the carriage were two Turks, father and son, whose only luggage appeared to consist of a gramophone. This ubiquitous instrument is very popular in the Hedjaz, and many Arabic records for it are now to be obtained—among them even passages from the Koran! I have never lost an opportunity of pointing out the impropriety of this, having always entertained a strong objection to this invention of the Evil One.

We travelled through open cultivated country till night fell. The Gebel-esh-sheikh, a fine peak overlooking Damascus, well above the snow-line, was still visible the following morning. In the course of the first day we passed several large stations, but by the morning of the second we had entered the desert and thenceforward few habitations were visible. The soil was brown and dry, with scanty herbage, which thinned out more and more as the train passed on to the south. We had brought what food we required—mostly hard-boiled eggs, bread, and cakes, but what with the dust and the stuffy atmosphere we could hardly eat anything. Through the night we dozed at intervals, but sleep in our constrained position was difficult. The second day I had a bout of malarial fever, which lasted till we got to Medina and did not enhance my enjoyment of the journey. The kindness of our fellow-passengers in this emergency was remarkable. Seeing that I was ill, they insisted on crowding together so that I could have room to lie down, as often as I would permit them to do so. The Turkish officers, who had a

small charcoal brazier, cooked things for me when possible, and gave me fruit, of which we had foolishly lost our own supply. We were able to repay them for this in some measure, as we had a "Primus" stove which made tea in a few minutes whenever any one wanted any.

There was a small closed compartment at the end of the corridor that was occupied by an elderly Turk with his son, wife, and two daughters. I was sorry for the latter, for they were the only women on the train. They spent most of the time intoning what is known as the "Maulid," a poetical work describing the birth of the Prophet.

On the third day we arrived at a station at nine in the morning and did not leave till five in the afternoon. This was owing to the engine driver, who should have taken us on, not being there for some reason. Our own driver said he was dead tired and must have a sleep. As we heard that the track ahead was in a very dangerous condition we made few protests, and in fact were only too glad to get out and stretch our legs. This station, like most of them, consisted merely of a couple of tin huts and a tank. We soon had to take refuge in our carriage from the heat of the sun. The reddish sand of the Arabian and Syrian deserts is not, however, nearly so trying to the eyes in bright sunlight as that of Egypt—nor does the country, being generally hilly, give the same idea of desolation as the Sahara.

The engine driver being at last sufficiently refreshed, we started again. Another long night passed, and we were traversing a country broken up into fantastically shaped hills and covered with huge boulders of weird forms. Some stood straight up on end like huge Cleopatra's Needles. Others reminded me of Stonehenge, and for about an hour we passed through a plain covered

as far as the eye could reach with rocks nearly resembling the "toad rock" at Tunbridge Wells. We were now in Arabia, and as we proceeded the aspect of the country became ever wilder. High mountain ranges appeared on either side, and the great pinnacles of rock became more twisted and uncanny in appearance. The track wound through gloomy gorges over which huge rocks hung menacingly. About midday we reached Medain Salih. This is the boundary of the Hedjaz province, and beyond it no one, not being a Mohammedan, is allowed to pass. When the railway was being built all the European engineers were discharged at this point and the work was carried on entirely by Turks and Arabs. This place, which itself is simply a couple of tin shanties, is remarkable for the extraordinary rock dwellings, which from time immemorial have excited the wonder of travellers. These have been well described by the Arabian explorer Doughty and several others. The huge isolated boulders which cover the country are here hollowed out and fashioned into caves with doors, very much like the rock temples of Abu Simbel in Upper Nubia. I was unable to examine them closely, but there are hundreds of them, and they appear to be beautifully made. According to the Arabian story, this place as its name implies, was the town where dwelt the prophet Salih. As related in the Koran, the people of these cities being hard of heart and refusing to listen to his preaching, beside killing his miraculous camel, were finally overwhelmed by a convulsion of nature like that which destroyed the Cities of the Plain on the occasion when Lot's wife came to such an untimely end. "The earthquake overtook them and the morning found them lying dead in their city." [1]

[1] Koran, chap. vii.

In the afternoon of this the third day we reached a good-sized village surrounded by date palms—the first habitations we had seen since leaving Syria. Here we stayed for an hour and were able to replenish our provisions and get some coffee. All the stations south of Medain Salih are fortified with trenches and barbed wire, and the whole scene reminds one of South Africa at the time of the war. There was fighting all along here while the railway was in course of construction, and the posts are still occasionally attacked by wandering tribes. We passed several wrecked engines that had run off the track owing to it not having been properly laid, and we were obliged to proceed very carefully. We were told that it was by no means unlikely that we should be attacked between this place and Medina—not by the belligerent tribes, but by bands of marauders whose object was merely robbery. We therefore looked to our weapons on re-starting. We were due to arrive at Medina at noon the next day—Sunday.

Nothing happened during the night, and we were all much cheered by the reflection that it was the last we had to spend in that accursed train. I was also feeling much better, in spite, or perhaps because, of having had no medicine whatever. We were somewhat delayed, and it was not till one o'clock that the dull thudding of distant artillery fire told us that we were approaching our destination. The stations were now protected by considerable earthworks and had garrisons of a company or more. I did not particularly admire either the construction of these defences or the sites chosen for them. A little later, through a gap in the hills, there appeared the needle-like minarets of the Prophet's mosque—then, as we emerged on to the plain, the city itself. One of our Turkish friends, standing with me on the footboard,

pointed out several places with familiar names—the Mountain of Uhud, where the forces of the Prophet were defeated by the Koreish, the tomb of his uncle Hamza, and the different gates. As we drew nearer the rattle of musketry fire became audible, and as we steamed into the station I half expected to find a hand-to-hand conflict going on outside the booking office. The fighting, however, for the moment was on the other side of the town, and the station was not under fire. That morning however it had been, and consequently the crowd that usually assembles to see the train come in was absent—very fortunately for me as it turned out.

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Another digression is necessary here to explain the causes and conduct of this little war, and how we came to pass in as we did, unmolested by the besiegers.

This part of Arabia being theoretically a province of Turkey, the Arab tribes inhabiting it are nominally Turkish subjects. Turkey being the most powerful Mohammedan country of the present day, her ruler claims the title of "Commander of the Faithful," and on him devolves the guardianship of the sacred cities, and the maintenance of order there. As a matter of fact, however, apart from occupying Mecca and Medina and the coast ports, Turkey has little real authority in the Hedjaz. The Bedou remain, what they always have been, independent tribes, each community having its own country, rulers, laws, and customs. They are an intensely aristocratic race, setting great store by genealogy and noble descent; they despise the rest of the world, not excepting the so-called Arabs of the towns, who are usually of mixed blood, or the other Arabic-speaking peoples, such as the Egyptians and Syrians. It is certain that few other races can boast such pure

breeding as the Arabs, or more honourable traditions. The best families have done no manual labour except fighting and brigandage since the creation of Adam.

These Arabs, known generically as the "Bedou," live in the desert; that is to say their country is dry and arid generally, though fertile spots occur. They build no towns, but move from place to place. They despise all civilized customs and appliances—even houses. Their food is of the simplest, their dress a single cotton gown. Their favourite pursuit is war in some good cause, or failing that robbery. They are excellent horsemen and camel masters, very hardy, daring, and resourceful. In character, though brave, generous, and hospitable, they are treacherous and consider things allowable in war that are decidedly not "cricket." They are by no means fanatically religious, contrary to the received idea; they neither fast nor pray, and in reality are only nominal Mohammedans.

The pilgrims consider them savages and have good reason to hate and fear them; so also have the inhabitants of the Arabian towns.

For many years past the Turks have found it less trouble to pay a certain sum of money to the sheikhs of the Bedou tribes through whose country the pilgrim caravans have to pass, in return for immunity from attack, rather than to send large escorts with them. Though it may well be considered undignified for a civilized Government to submit to such extortions in their own country, there is really no help for it. To occupy and police Arabia in such a manner as would make it a safe country for travellers, would be at present about as practicable an undertaking as an invasion of the moon. Neither the Turks nor any one else can hope to accomplish it. The character of the country,

difficulty of transport, and scarcity of water would effectually settle a European army, and the Bedou themselves are much more formidable opponents than the half-armed savages we destroyed in such numbers at Omdurman. They are well armed with modern rifles (a good proportion being small bores), and, judging by the amount of firing at long ranges round Medina, they have little trouble in obtaining ammunition. In fact, so far as I could see, no attempt is made to prevent traffic in either rifles or cartridges; they are sold in the open market both in Mecca and Medina.

It is impossible to do more than guess at the number of Bedou Arabs in Arabia—seeing that three-fourths of it is unknown. But I have been told that the Hedjaz tribes alone, were they to combine, could put nearly 100,000 men in the field.

With the completion of the Hedjaz railway [1] the Turkish Government made a precipitate and, in the circumstances, an ill-advised attempt to stop further payment of tribute for safe conduct to the tribes *en route*. This as a matter of fact did not amount to very much, as the part between Syria and Medina never gave the caravans any great trouble. The news however spread through Arabia and alarmed the more important tribes between Medina and Mecca, and Medina and Yembu. If they were not allowed to plunder and not paid to refrain from doing so—they would evidently be in a bad way.

[1] The deposed Sultan, Abdul Hamid, was mainly responsible for this work. Subscriptions in aid of it were raised throughout the whole Moslem world. The railway reached Medina in the year I went there—1908. It is proposed to carry it on to Mecca; but there seems little prospect of this being accomplished for some time to come. The object in building it was in part to render the pilgrimage safer and easier, and in part strategical.

When the first train arrived it was the subject of much curiosity. At first they did not realize its significance. "Can this thing," they asked, "carry as much as a camel?" When, a few days later, they saw it disgorging hundreds of men and tons of baggage, they began to realize that something new had come into their very conservative country and to resent it accordingly. It was fairly obvious that this would soon make camel-travelling a thing of the past; and with it all their profits derived from the hiring-out of the camels, and the tribute they had for so long extorted. Further, they observed with consternation that the train was by no means so easy to "stick up" as they had imagined it would be, and on hearing that it came all the way from Syria in four days, their amazement passed all bounds.

During the ensuing two months their sheikhs no doubt held many anxious consultations. Deputations waited on the governor of Medina to protest against the railway on the ground that it would bring Europeans into the country. The governor was authorized to promise them on the word of the Caliph himself that this should not happen. It was pointed out to them that arrivals by train could be scrutinized much more easily than formerly, in the days of caravans.

The one idea of the Bedou was to stop the railway going any farther. But it was not at all easy for them to find a pretext on which they could reasonably object. The railway had been built and was to be continued by subscription throughout the whole of Islam. Enthusiasm for it ran high; it was regarded as a grand and patriotic undertaking and a triumphant refutation of the charge that the Moslem religion is decadent or lacking in vitality. It had received the blessing of the religious heads of all

sects, and rich and poor alike had contributed their share with equal generosity.

The best thing to do, it seemed to the Bedou, was to pick a quarrel on some other grounds and make things so hot for the Turks that for a time at any rate they would have something better to do than build railways. Opportunities for doing so were not wanting. Four miles East of Medina is situated the tomb of the uncle of Mohammed, Hamza, who fell at the battle of Uhud; a place of pious visitation by all pilgrims. The "Benee Ali" (sons of Ali), a large and important tribe living and cultivating round the city, were charged with the policing of this road, and paid for doing so. At the end of Ramadan two men returning late at night were killed, presumably by robbers. The governor sent a protest to the chiefs of the tribe and demanded payment of a fine. The effect of the answer he received was that they could no longer be responsible for the road and were not going to pay anything. Some further negotiations took place, but their demeanour was so truculent that it became obvious that they were "out for a row." On the 3rd of Shawal[1] a force of about 1,000 men with a Maxim was sent to disperse a large body of tribesmen that had assembled, and was threatening the town. The Turks, supported by artillery fire from the walls, advanced boldly through the date plantations. Before long however they were completely outflanked by their more mobile enemy, and subjected to a galling fire from all sides. On their attempting to retreat the Bedou charged in their usual impetuous manner, captured the Maxim, killed a hundred men, and drove the rest back into the town in the wildest confusion. Since that day there had been several engagements on a small scale, but no

[1] The month after Ramadan.

serious fighting. The Turks had abandoned everything but the town itself and two forts lying outside the walls which were strongly garrisoned. Reinforcements from Turkey and Syria were hurried forward, and included several batteries of artillery, which were distributed along the wall.

The Benee Ali on their side proclaimed a sort of holy war against the Turks, and invited all Arabia to assist them. They said they would not harm or interfere with the pilgrims, who should be free to come and go as usual, and to pass through their lines. Their quarrel was with the Government and the Government alone.

The assistance they asked for was soon forthcoming; fresh levies kept arriving from all quarters. For once in a way the tribes seemed in perfect agreement.

At the time of our arrival the Turkish troops in Medina may have mustered 10,000, with twenty guns; the Arabs upwards of 20,000, and were daily increasing.

Medina is situated in an open plain at an altitude of about 3,000 feet above sea-level. On three sides the plain is bounded by mountains, from five to ten miles distant from the town, but to the south the country is open. The city itself in shape is roughly an oval, measuring about a mile at its greater diameter. It really consists of two towns joined together. The older one, which has a separate wall, contains the mosque and most of the dwelling houses and shops; the other is the more modern part, in which are situated most of the public buildings, markets, and barracks. It includes a large open space in which caravans assemble on arrival or before starting. A smaller wall has been built on to the other to protect this quarter. There are several gates, which are named after the places to which the roads issuing from them lead: one, for in-

stance, is called the Bab-esh-Shâm or Syrian gate, another the Mecca gate, and so on. Water is supplied by a number of wells, and is plentiful and good in quality. There are date plantations and other cultivation almost completely surrounding the town, and extending for several miles. The railway station lies to the west of the town, about a quarter of a mile from the outer wall. At the time I was there it was not completed, but some substantial stone buildings were then in course of erection, which, by the way, being quite bullet-proof, proved very useful during the fighting. The cemetery known as the Bakeia is on the south side, abutting on to the wall. Here are buried many of the most famous men in the history of Islam, including several relations of the Prophet. During my stay it was almost constantly under fire.

I should put the normal population of Medina, apart from troops and pilgrims, at 30,000 all told. Their occupations are almost all in connection with the pilgrims, on whom they subsist almost entirely. They work hard for the three months of the pilgrim season, and do nothing the rest of the year. There is a place for every one in the system. The wealthier classes own houses which they let for large sums. The younger men are mostly employed as guides, and are often very generously rewarded for their services. The shopkeepers of course do a roaring trade, and every one, down to the porters and water-carriers, makes a good thing out of the visitors.

These guides, known as "Mutowifeen" (sing. Moutwif), gave me great trouble on entering both Medina and Mecca. Their business is to take charge of every pilgrim wealthy enough to afford the luxury, look after him during his stay, show him the places of interest, and recite for him the appropriate prayers and salutations before the

various tombs, etc. The name is derived from the ceremony of walking round the Kaaba at Mecca, which is known as "towaf"[1] (as nearly as the word can be represented by the Roman characters). For these services there is no fixed tariff—their remuneration depends on the generosity and depth of purse of each individual; but pilgrims usually are disposed to be liberal. For this reason there is great competition to get hold of every well-dressed visitor, especially if he possesses much luggage and is attended by servants. Formerly the arrival of such not infrequently was the cause of squabbles that ended in an appeal to arms. To put a stop to such scandalous proceedings, the Government some years ago started an arrangement by which each country is allotted to a certain number of these Mutowifs (to anglicize the plural), by whom all the pilgrims arriving from it are taken. To each group a sheikh is appointed, who settles any disputes, and to whom the pilgrims may complain if dissatisfied with the conduct of their *ciceroni*. This arrangement works admirably, since the guides appointed to each country naturally study its language and peculiarities, and can consequently make their visitors' stay much more pleasant and instructive than it otherwise would be. But it was very awkward for us!

It was not till we were almost arrived at the station that we heard of this new arrangement, and at once I scented trouble. To go with the Zanzibar guides would never do. I should be forced to associate with every one coming from the African coast, and should be in constant

[1] طواف مطوّف should properly be transliterated ṭowáf, muṭowwif; but as many Arabic consonants have sounds that do not exist in English it seems of little use to employ diacritical marks to represent them.

danger of being recognized by some one who had known me in Mombasa, even if I did not get caught out in the language, which was only too probable. It was necessary to decide instantly on some plan that would serve in this emergency. After a hurried consultation we agreed as follows. Abdul Wahid came from Bagdad; I was a "derweish" who had been living there for some time, and Masaudi, who is a black man, was my slave. The term derweish requires explanation. In its strict sense it means a member of certain orders of a semi-monastic description, such as are common in Egypt and the Sudan. It is a title, however, often assumed by people who for some reason do not wish to be identified with any particular nationality. This may be owing to their political convictions, to their having got into trouble in their own country, or to some question of parentage.

As I have related, when the train drew up the station was comparatively empty. A few Mutowifs, recognizable by their peculiar straw caps and brightly-coloured dresses, were waiting for us, however, and at once got into the carriages. As we were the only pilgrims of any consequence from their point of view, they at once asked who we were. We answered as agreed. Some, however, inquired about us among the other passengers, who mentioned Zanzibar. No Zanzibar or Bagdad Mutowif was there, luckily, so we were allowed to collect our luggage and proceed unmolested. This took some little time, and when we were finally ready, the station was almost deserted. We started to walk into the town, followed by the porters carrying our things. We passed through the heavy fortified gate of the outer wall, down the long straight street past the barracks, and reached the big square in front of the inner gate. Halting here, we asked a passer-by if he could recommend us a

house—comfortable, clean, and not too expensive. He examined us attentively, and, apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, said that he himself had a couple of rooms in his house that he would like to let to us if we cared to come and look at them. This we agreed to do, so leaving the baggage and porters in charge of Masaudi, Abdul Wahid and myself followed him through the inner gate and down the narrow winding street leading to the mosque. We turned up an alley to the left, at the end of which was the house. The rooms in question were on the second floor and seemed to me exactly what we wanted. They were clean, light, and well-furnished—at least, the living-room was;—the other served as bath-room and kitchen combined. We expressed approval, and asked for his terms; after a little discussion, he agreed to accept £2 for our stay, provided it did not extend beyond the departure of the mahmal for Mecca, which was due to take place in about a month. I was astonished at the small sum asked, and so was Abdul Wahid, but, as will appear presently, there was a reason for all this. It was not indeed for some time afterwards that I fully realized how my guardian angel must have been hustling himself that day. Our good fortune in falling in with this man was quite extraordinary.

Abdul Wahid went off to fetch Masaudi and the luggage, while I remained in the house, the proprietor's son, a boy of about eleven, being sent to keep me company. They returned in a quarter of an hour, bringing disquieting news. Masaudi, left alone, had been surrounded by guides asking who we were, and where we had gone. News of the arrival of Zanzibar pilgrims had spread, and the authorized Mutowifs had come to claim us. Masaudi was angrily denying that he had ever seen Zanzibar,

when Abdul Wahid turned up and interfered, pointing out that we were very tired and had just finished a long journey, and that if they had anything to say, they could come round to the house later, when we had had a wash and something to eat. This appeal was successful, temporarily, and they were left in peace. As soon as we were together again, and the porters had been paid and had departed, I was told what had happened. I turned to the owner of the house, who was listening, and "frankly" explained the trouble. I told him I really did come from Zanzibar, but had been warned not to employ the proper guides or go to their houses, as the guides were thieves, and the houses dirty and overcrowded. I said that I liked his much better, and wanted to study while in Medina, and not be bothered by a lot of people coming in and out all day. What did he advise?

He said he quite understood, and that it was not unusual for visitors to try to get out of employing their proper guides; as for that, his son could do all we wanted in their stead, or we could take some one by the day, as we liked. He advised us to say that we all came from Bagdad,[1] and on hearing that Abdul Wahid had been to Medina before, suggested that he should deny being a pilgrim, and say he had come there to study or on business, and that I had already made an agreement with him to act as my Mutowif. But he warned us that there would be trouble, and that if they got to know I was a Zanzibari, they would have a right to insist on taking me.

[1] There are so many Syrians and Bagdadis living in Medina that visitors from those parts have generally friends of their own to show them round, and are allowed consequently to dispense with the services of regular Mutowifs.

This seemed the best plan in the circumstances—at any rate, we could think of nothing better.

During the next two hours, three Mutowifs turned up. Abdul Wahid conducted the conversation, and did it excellently. He made, as usual, so much noise that the other men were unable to get a word in at all, and I don't think, after a few minutes, any of them particularly fancied having him for a tenant. We told the story we had agreed upon. They tried to talk Swahili to Masaudi, but he obviously did not understand a word. Finally, the last retired, convinced that wherever else we came from, it was not Zanzibar. Then the owner of the house came in and smilingly told us that to the best of his belief there were no more. We then had tea.

The proprietor now informed us that he was an Abyssinian, by name Iman, and had come here from Mecca about ten years before. He had married a widow with one child, the boy Ibrahim, whose acquaintance we had already made. He told us that he had a small private income and this house. He let rooms when opportunity offered, but did not get many tenants, as few Abyssinians came to the Hedjaz—most of them being Christians. His true story I heard from him later. He had been captured when a child by Arab slave-raiders and sold in Mecca. Having had the luck to fall into good hands, he had been able to save money and eventually to purchase freedom from his master, on which he had emigrated to Medina.

A tall, dark man of about forty-five years of age, he was always pleasant and cheerful and did his best to make us at home. It is worthy of remark that in the East no odium attaches to a man who has been once a slave, as might be the case in Europe. In history we often find

ex-slaves in command of armies, acting as ambassadors, or even on the throne itself.

The Prophet's mosque is known locally as the "Haram," a term which is also applied to the mosque of the Kaaba at Mecca, that of Omar at Jerusalem, and many others. The word in its root form implies unlawfulness; here it means "sanctified," and develops, in the manner peculiar to the Arabic language, into "hareem"—the women's apartments—and so comes to be applied to women themselves.

The mosque is situated about the centre of the inner town, and has three principal entrances. There is an open square in the middle surrounded by a colonnade. The Prophet's tomb is in the left-hand top corner, as seen facing the Kibla, the direction of Mecca. The tomb, which is covered by a dome that appears above the roof of the building, is surrounded by a rectangular iron railing about ten yards by fifteen. Looking through this, a curtain is seen hanging from the roof so as to form a smaller enclosure within. The curtain is green in colour and elaborately embroidered with passages from the Koran. Within this curtained space is the tomb of the Prophet, and those of his disciples, Abu Bakar and Omar, the first two Caliphs. Adjoining this curtain on the north side is another tomb, said to be that of his daughter Fatima, but this last is admittedly of doubtful authenticity, so much so that the salutations to her are read twice over, once here and once in the Bakeia, where some people are of opinion that she was really interred.

When we had finished tea, Iman came to suggest that, if we were sufficiently rested, we should go to the Haram for the Aesha prayer—the last of the day. Ibrahim would show us the way. Abdul Wahid and I went

together, leaving Masaudi. On reaching the main street, we turned to the left, and two minutes' walk brought us to the principal gate. It was now dark, and the effect was both curious and impressive. The vista of tall houses, with their peculiar lattice windows overhanging the narrow cobbled street, now gloomy and deserted, ended abruptly in a flight of wide steps leading up to a great arch, through which appeared a prospect of marble columns, blazing arc lights, and hundreds of hanging lamps. As we approached, a sort of confused murmur became audible. We handed our shoes to the gate-keeper and passed in, Ibrahim stepping in front as we did so, and reciting for our benefit the appropriate prayer which we were supposed to repeat after him. I shall not translate any of these recitations. They are very much what one would expect, and, apart from references to Mohammed, would do equally well for Christians visiting the tombs of their saints.

A strange spectacle it is, and one that never fails to impress the new-comer. Scattered about are many in the various postures of prayer, others are reading from the Koran with the low monotonous intonation and swaying motion of the body peculiar to that occupation. Here and there again small groups squat round learned men, listening to their reading or explanation of some religious work. Others converse in lower tones of secular matters, or are engaged with their private correspondence. About the railed enclosure round the tomb stand lines of men, each group being headed by the Mutowif, who declaims the salutation in a loud sing-song voice, which the others follow or attempt to follow in chorus. As many of them do not understand Arabic, the result of this is often ludicrous in the extreme. Many good stories are current of the way the sense is unintentionally perverted; but

to appreciate their humour, it is necessary to know the language.

We moved forward to the "Makam" of the Prophet—that is to say, the place where he used to pray. This is now fronted by a small elaborately carved arch with many candles at the sides. Here we were directed to pray the two rukkas customary on entering the mosque.[1] While doing so, we were the objects of much comment on the part of a group of guides standing round. Abdul Wahid they at once identified as a "Bagdadi," but they could not agree about me. Some said "Persian," others "from Bussorah." When we got up they asked us who we were. I said I was a derweish, a wanderer on the face of the earth. One of them tried me in Persian, at which I laughed and shook my head. Then he offered to take us round for a dollar, to which we agreed. As we walked across to the tomb, he told me that he would recite for us a special invocation, which was inoffensive to the prejudices of the Sheia sect. I thanked him, but said I was not a Sheie.[2] This puzzled him, for he had made up his mind that I was a Persian. The Sheia detest Abu Bakar and Omar, so their names are either left out of the "visitation" altogether, or else they merely say, "Peace be with you, companion of the Apostle." The Sunna, on the other hand, say a long greeting to both.

Until quite recent years, the Sheia heresy was held in such detestation in the holy cities that Persians and others professing it ran considerable dangers there, and were not infrequently ill-treated, or even killed. They retaliated

[1] Beside the five regular prayers which are compulsory, there are many occasions on which "Sunna," or optional prayers, are enjoined. Such occasions are on entering a mosque, sighting the new moon, giving thanks, when in danger, or thirsty, and many others.

[2] See note, p. 41, "Bedou."

by venting their spite in curses on Abu Bakar, Omar, and the others whose memory they have been brought up to hate. Latterly, however, a more reasonable attitude has prevailed on both sides. A Sheie need no longer hide himself like an infidel. He may openly proclaim his opinion, and the guardians of the sanctuary need fear no acts of vandalism on his part. "We cannot bless," is the modern and reasonable view, "but need not curse."

Arrived at the railings, we were directed to peer between the bars. Nothing more is visible than the folds of the green curtain I have described. Then, standing back, our guide repeated the salutation to the Prophet, at the close of which we repeated the fatiha with upturned palms. Moving round to the south side, we similarly greeted Abu Bakar and Omar, then, on the east side, the Saints buried in the Bakeia, and, lastly, the Prophet's daughter Fatima. The supposed tomb of the last-named is visible, being outside the green curtain, and is decorated with many jewels said to be of great value. Passing round to the north side, and turning our faces once more towards Mecca, we prayed two more rukkas. Opposite the tomb on this side is a slightly raised platform for the exclusive use of the eunuch guardians of the mosque. Twenty or thirty of them are generally to be found squatting there, chatting or reading. Night and day there is always some one on guard.

The call of the Muadhin to prayer was now resounding from the minarets, and the crowd began to drift into lines. Those who had been reading returned their "Korans"[1]

[1] The term "Koran" means the substance of the sacred work, not the actual book, for which the proper word is "Mashaf." The Koran is about the length of the New Testament. It is written in the very purest Arabic, and for that reason is not readily understood by Arabs of the present day, many of the words being obsolete.

to the library; the lecturers gathered up their books and papers, and any contributions the audience might have made. The Imam having taken his place, we prayed the four rukkas of the Aesha prayer, after which we paid off our guide and walked back to the house.

After partaking of some supper that Masaudi had prepared, we smoked a shisha and prepared to turn in. Our host Iman came to wish us good night, and to ask if we wished to be called at dawn for the morning prayer. This was really rather inconsiderate of him, as we could not very well say no. We accordingly assented, but mentioned that if he did forget about it we should not be seriously angry—a remark that seemed to afford him much amusement. He recommended me to dress like the townspeople as soon as I could get some clothes, as then, he said, no one would bother any more about me. Otherwise I should be continually pestered with questions as to where I came from.

Part of it is in rhymed prose. The production of so extraordinary a work by an illiterate man is considered one of the proofs of the Prophet's mission. Islam is divided as to whether the Koran was created or is coeval with the deity himself.

CHAPTER IV

MEDINA

THE next morning we woke about 9.30—Iman having unaccountably forgotten to call us at daybreak. We had agreed that it was undesirable that Masaudi and I should be seen about together, for we might meet some one who knew him, and whose attention might thus be attracted to me. Alone, or with Abdul Wahid, I had little fear of being recognized even if I ran across some one who had formerly known me. Masaudi accordingly went off to the Haram accompanied by his chaperon Ibrahim, while Abdul Wahid and I did some shopping. As no ready-made clothes were obtainable, we engaged a tailor, who accompanied us to the market and chose what he considered suitable materials. His proceedings rather amused me. Once engaged, he assumed entire command and chose the colours and materials he thought becoming, without in the least consulting our inclinations. The only time I ventured a remonstrance I was told not to interfere. Having bought what he wanted, we returned to his workshop, where I was duly measured. I ordered two suits, which I got three days later and from that time forward generally wore.

This costume, with slight variations, is the same in all the Hedjaz towns, and is frequently adopted by foreign visitors. It consists of wide cotton trousers, a long shirt

reaching to the ankles, a coloured gown, and a sash which holds a dagger of peculiar shape and often a six-shooter as well. Over these is worn a "jubba" with wide sleeves —of any material or colour. In troublous times such as these most people carry swords, either slung under the left armpit over the jubba, or carried in the hand like a walking-stick. As head-covering some, especially those who have performed the pilgrimage, wear a sort of straw cap worked with coloured silk and wound with a white band: others wear a cotton cap under a cloth fashioned into a turban.

Thus arrayed there was nothing in my appearance to excite remark, nor was I again bothered by the guides except once more as I shall relate.

We prayed in the Haram at midday and spent the afternoon exploring the city. It is all interesting and picturesque. In contrast with most Eastern places, everything has a clean and well-to-do appearance. The business part of the town is practically confined to two long streets, both very narrow. Three weeks later, when the pilgrims had begun to arrive in earnest, it was difficult to make one's way along them. Some of the dwelling houses in the residential quarter are four or five stories high, and have small gardens behind. All are built with the peculiar overhanging lattices which are so characteristic of Eastern houses. These are constructed to command a view of the front door while leaving the observer himself invisible. They are provided with loopholes through which one may have a good look at visitors before opening to them, and discharge at them a blessing or a charge of buckshot as may seem advisable.

On the way back we met an old acquaintance of Abdul Wahid's—a Persian, who had been formerly valet to a friend of his. We badly wanted a cook, for none of us

were capable of preparing any more elaborate dish than the boiled eggs on which, with melons, bread, and honey, we had been subsisting. The melons were excellent and very cheap. Unfortunately the dates were over just before we arrived. We agreed with this man that he should cook for us in his own house and bring the food in such a state that it could easily be warmed up: and if satisfactory we promised to engage him for the journey to Mecca. He turned out to be a most accomplished *chef*, and from that time forward we fared very well. I am sure he would have made the fortune of any London restaurant.

The next few days passed uneventfully. I spent a good deal of time in the mosque, where I would find a comfortable place with my back to a pillar, pretend to read a book, and watch the people. They indeed were a never-failing source of amusement, and every day brought fresh arrivals. A large caravan came in from Yembu bringing crowds of Indians, Javanese, and Chinamen. Every Eastern race might be identified in the motley crowd and every variety of costume, till the whole resembled nothing so much as a fancy-dress ball. In the same line at prayer stand European Turks with their frock-coats and stick-up collars—Anatolians with enormous trousers and fantastic weapons—Arabs from the West, who look as if they were arrayed for burial—the Bedou, with their spears and scimetars—and Indians, who in spite of their being the richest class there, manage as usual to look the most unkempt and the least clean. Then beside there are Persians, Chinese, Javanese, Japanese, Malayans, a dozen different African races, Egyptians, Afghans, Baluchies, Swahilis, and "Arabs" of every description. Representatives of half the races of the globe may be

picked out in the mosque any day during the month before the pilgrimage.. The kaleidoscopic effect and the babel of tongues may be imagined.

The behaviour of each party as it is brought into the mosque for the first time is an interesting study, and well exemplifies their racial characteristics. The extravagant emotion of the Indians, when they actually see with their own eyes this tomb which they have from childhood been taught to regard with superstitious awe, contrasts with the subdued behaviour of the more phlegmatic Arabs—while the Javanese and Chinamen seem determined to be astonished at nothing. Yet all of them are impressed in their way. Many burst into tears and frantically kiss the railings: I have seen Indians and Afghans fall down apparently unconscious. They seem to be much more affected here than before the Kaaba itself. At Mecca the feeling is one of awe and reverence, here the personal element comes in. The onlooker might fancy they were visiting the tomb of some very dear friend, one whom they had actually known and been intimate with in his lifetime. With frantic interest they listen to their guide as he describes the surroundings. Here is the place where the Prophet prayed, the pulpit he preached from, the pillar against which he leant—there, looking into the mosque, is the window of Abu Bakar's house, where for long he stayed as a guest, and beyond is the little garden planted by his daughter Fatima. All these marvels may be spurious in a sense, since no traces of the original mosque remain, yet the place itself must at least be genuine, and this idea detracts in no wise from the pilgrim's appreciation of them.

What must be the thoughts, I often reflected, of the pilgrims from countries now under foreign domination

where Islam exists more or less on sufferance, its creed derided by the governing classes, its law tampered with when it does not happen to fit in with the ruler's notions of civilization? Here in the Prophet's own city are at least all the outward signs of worldly wealth and power. The Moslem standard floats over its imposing fortresses. Rows of cannon protect its gates. The law of the Koran holds good within, unchanged in a thousand years, and none but believers may even enter the sacred territory. The splendour of the Mosque itself suggests the bygone glories of their empire.

The guns are obsolete—a 4·7 would soon convert the walls into a dust-heap—and the mosque is inferior to many others, but that is neither here nor there. The illusion remains, and no doubt brings visions to many of the time when the Caliph ruled the civilized world, and to all the hope that better days may yet dawn.

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Masaudi had engaged a man to recite the Koran—a pious act in memory of his dead father. He was, as is usual, a blind man who earned his living in this way. Astonishing as it may seem, a great many people know the whole book by heart, and will repeat it without making a single mistake or missing a syllable. Blindness unfortunately is very common in this part of the East, and every endeavour is made by charitable people to find occupation for those so afflicted. As a matter of fact in the Hedjaz blind men, and in fact beggars of all sorts, have a very good time. Charity, called one of the four pillars of Islam, is considered especially blessed when practised on the pilgrimage. I have seen people throw about handfuls of silver when leaving the mosque. Many of the beggars, however, are impostors of the worst kind, and

should be suppressed. In Mecca afterwards I talked to a blind man who told me he had lost his sight ten years before, after a bad attack of ophthalmia. He had at once begun to learn the Koran, and in two years had been able to repeat it perfectly. The first three chapters were the real difficulty, he said—after that the rest came comparatively easily.

I inquired once whether one could get leave to pass within the railing around the tomb, but learnt that only the Benee Hashim, that is to say the descendants of Ali and Fatima, and the eunuchs in charge were permitted to do so. Not that any one who did get inside would be any nearer a solution of the mystery that lies behind the veil, for to raise the curtain unobserved would be quite impracticable, and to be seen doing so would of course mean instant destruction. Some have expressed doubts as to whether Mohammed is really buried there at all. Without pretending to sift the evidence said to support the view that he is not, I think it to the last degree unlikely that there is anything in it. The Prophet lived to see his religion supreme in Arabia, and at his death was practically an emperor. It is inconceivable that his grave could have been forgotten in a place like Medina, which has always been a bulwark of the faith.

There is a legend that many years ago two Europeans penetrated in disguise into the city, and attempted to tunnel through from their house into the mausoleum. They were discovered and crucified. (This and other stories are often quoted to justify the great precaution taken in the reception of converts of Western origin.) I have been asked what would happen to a disguised European who had the misfortune to be unmasked here or in Mecca. It is generally believed by the inhabitants

themselves that the authorities have instructions to put to death any one so discovered without applying to Stamboul for confirmation. There is probably no foundation in fact for this belief, though it is just the sort of order that would be given in Turkey. The local authorities, if informed quietly, would most likely try to get the intruder out of the country safely—certainly they would try to do so in the case of an Englishman.[1] If the identity of the visitor became revealed to his Mutowif it would be merely a question of "how much." You can bribe anybody to do anything in Arabian towns. If discovered by the townspeople in Mecca outside the pilgrimage season it is doubtful if anything very much would happen, except that the traveller would have to leave in a hurry. At Medina I fancy they are rather more fanatical on this point, for the shrine owes to its supposed exclusiveness much of its value in Moslem estimation. Also it is not so easy to get away from as Mecca.

But all the Sultan's horses and all the Sultan's men would not avail to save one who became known for a disguised "Effrengi"[2] in either place from the wild fury of the pilgrim mob at this season. A quick passage to a better world by a sword-thrust or bullet would probably be the best that could befall him, for a much more unpleasant end might well be feared. The only chance in such an emergency would be to repeat the Moslem profession of faith and endeavour to take refuge in the house of some influential person, such as the Shareef of Mecca.

It occasionally happens that Moslems of irreproachable

[1] This was written in 1909. To-day I am not so sure.

[2] This term, which is merely a corruption of "français," is applied to Western Christians.

antecedents are accused of being disguised Christians. The Turkish officer who took some of the photographs that appear in this book came near losing his life at the hands of some Magribi Arabs on the Day of Arafat: and I heard of a Russian pilgrim who, though he was, and his family had been, Moslem for generations, was saved with difficulty by the Turkish authorities at Yembu from an angry crowd excited by a peculiar form of headgear he was wearing, which resembled a European hat.

We had tried several times to visit the Bakeia, the cemetery outside the wall, where many of the most famous people in Mohammedan history lie buried. The gate however was kept locked owing to its being exposed to the enemy's fire, and for long we could not get in. At the beginning of the siege there had been several casualties there, and the Government had decided to close it for the time being. Since the day of our arrival no further operations had been undertaken by either side, and nothing but an occasional cannon shot from the walls proclaimed that anything out of the ordinary was taking place.

Our friend Abdullah of Damascus had given us some introductions, and Abdul Wahid met some friends from Aleppo with whom we exchanged visits. The weather had turned very cold and many people were hoping that the Bedou camped round the town would get tired of it and go home—especially as many of them came from the warmer South. The same enthusiasm for the constitution was to be found here as in Damascus, but in a less degree. Arab and Turk alike seemed to have got parliamentarianism and Liberal principles on the brain. My dislike for both was regarded as hopelessly old-fashioned and reactionary. I am afraid I managed to give

the impression that Zanzibar is in a sadly backward state, or that I myself am peculiarly stupid. Not to know a word of any European language is to be held very ignorant even in Medina. Most people of the class with whom we associated had at any rate a smattering of French and sometimes of English too. I was careful never to know anything.

England and the English were in high favour everywhere, other European countries being nowhere in comparison. This was partly in consequence of our attitude in the then recent imbroglio with Austria over the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but was due still more to a genuine admiration and respect for British institutions and methods.[1]

There are several cafés in Medina, and in them we used to sit and smoke of an evening. They are however dirty and generally bad compared with those of Damascus. Any one starting a decent hotel and restaurant here would make his fortune. Another excellent speculation would be a cold-storage depot. Meat is rather expensive and fish of course unobtainable. In the shops many European food-stuffs are sold. It seems strange to see the advertisements of such things as Cadbury's Chocolate and Huntley and Palmer's biscuits in such surroundings.

I searched long to find something characteristic of the place to take away as a souvenir, but nothing of the sort was to be had. There are no industries, and no books are printed there. I bought some rather curious stones, known technically I believe as graphic granite, which were said to be found only at a certain hill in the neigh-

[1] This unfortunately no longer holds good, for our influence has since been muddled away. To-day for England we must read Germany.

bourhood.[1] On returning to Egypt I found precisely the same stones being sold in Cairo at about half the price. Many other pilgrims apparently got "had" in the same way. Abdul Wahid got let in over some manuscript books he bought at an extravagant price, in hopes of selling them in Europe at a still more extravagant profit. One of these, in Cufic characters, was supposed to have been written in the time of the Prophet, which of course would have made it of great value. One day while amusing myself by endeavouring to decipher some of it I came on a reference to a man who had lived many hundred years later, and concluded that the man who had sold it to Abdul Wahid was by no means so big a fool as the latter had supposed him.

We made friends with the sheikh in charge of the beautiful library attached to the Haram. I visited him there several times and was shown many interesting works of undoubted authenticity. This library, though small, is very well kept and luxuriously furnished. Admittance is free, but the books may not be taken away.

There are two "Turkish baths" in the town—both bad, and at this season fearfully overcrowded. These contrasts are found everywhere. Dirt and meanness alternate with extravagant luxury. Considering how very particular these people are about personal cleanliness, it is extraordinary that they should put up with such vile accommodation as is to be found in the baths both here and in Mecca.

The climate of Medina at this time of year is quite delightful. The air in the daytime is warm but very bracing, and at night it is quite cold. We always slept with at least two blankets. The great majority of the

[1] They come from the Yemen, as a matter of fact.

pilgrims cannot afford houses, and camp out in any open space they can find—most of them in the big square between the two sections of the town. Those from the South suffer much from cold, which doubtless accounts for the somewhat high mortality amongst them.

We had been living thus quietly for about a fortnight when the trouble with the Bedou began again to assume serious proportions. So quiet had they been since our arrival, that people began to think it was all over, and some owning houses and gardens outside the defences foolishly attempted to visit their property. They paid for their temerity with their lives. The following morning we were roused at daybreak by heavy rifle-fire to the south of the town, and learned that the Bedou had driven in the outposts in that direction and were firing on the defences. After breakfast Abdul Wahid and I went down to the gate leading to the Bakeia and found it locked and guarded. We asked the officer in charge if we might go up on the wall to see what was going on. He made no objection, merely warning us not to expose ourselves. We ascended and walked along the parapet till we came to a gun-embrasure, which commanded a good view of the proceedings, being at the south-west corner near the junction of the two walls. Here we found a gun about the size of a 12-pounder, firing black powder; it was manned by half-a-dozen men under a young officer. Along with them, comfortably under cover, were a couple of eunuchs, who, like ourselves, had come to see the fun. In front of us was open ground, extending for perhaps a thousand yards, dotted with graves and one or two ruined walls, beyond which the dense plantations of date-palms began. Half-way across, and rather to the right, one of these walls had been put in a "defensible con-

dition," and was held by some fifty riflemen, who were blazing away merrily at nothing in particular. Along the dark line of trees beyond, scattered puffs of smoke indicated the enemy's position. A few odd bullets whistled overhead or plumped harmlessly into the wall. Our gun fired an occasional round of common shell at the smoke where it appeared thickest.

Taking up a position where we could see well without exposing more of our persons than was absolutely necessary, we spent the morning smoking and talking with the men. The officer, unfortunately, did not speak Arabic, but Abdul Wahid managed to get rid of a lot of his bad Turkish. At midday, as nothing more seemed likely to happen, we adjourned to the mosque for prayer and then to lunch. That evening news arrived that several regiments of the best troops in the army, armed with rifles of the latest pattern, were on their way from Constantinople. They were accompanied by a Pasha of considerable renown in war, who was to take over the command at Medina. The Government apparently had come to the conclusion that something must be done to put an end to the present scandalous state of affairs.

The intelligence that he was about to be superseded seems to have roused the governor to energetic measures on his own account. Since the disastrous affair at the outset of the operations he had contented himself with a purely passive defence—hoping, no doubt, that cold, hunger, and internal squabbles would disperse the Bedou hordes without further bloodshed. He now determined to do something startling during the few days of authority remaining to him, and as a preliminary decided to undertake that operation of war known as a "reconnaissance in force"—in other words, to drive in the enemy's advanced

posts with a view to discovering where their main body was located and what it was doing. This, if I remember rightly, was stated in "Combined Training" to be an unsatisfactory and dangerous method of obtaining information, only permissible in very special circumstances; and so, indeed, it proved in this case.

The town is surrounded by date-plantations on three sides; to the west, however, the country is more or less open, rising gently for some distance, then broken up into low foot-hills, with scattered groves of date-palms. This open ground was commanded by the artillery placed on the walls and by the detached fort north-west of the town. On the following day at daybreak a force of about four thousand men was advanced in widely extended order. It soon encountered opposition, and by ten o'clock firing had become general all along the line. Warned by this that something was taking place, we went down to the Bakeia gate, intending to resume our former position. To my disappointment we were refused permission to ascend. We retired perforce, but after lunch, the sounds of the conflict in progress becoming too tantalizing, I insisted on trying again. Once more we were told it was out of the question; but this time I did not intend to take a refusal. We made a movement to go up the steps and the sentry presented his gun. We came down and began to argue with him. The officer in charge came out and told us we were fools. He said the whole face of the defences on that side was under fire. We swore we would be very careful and keep under cover, if he would let us go. He maintained that his orders were strict and that it was impossible. While continuing the discussion we gradually ascended the stairway step by step till, coming to a bend, we doubled round and disappeared.

I fully expected to be followed and ignominiously brought back; but apparently they had given us up as hopeless lunatics who had better be allowed to go and get shot if they really wanted to. Arrived at the top, we rapidly made our way along the wall to our old position, but found that the gun had been moved. Continuing our circuit of the wall we came upon it farther along, protecting the left flank of the line, and with it our old friends under a new officer. We were here very well situated to see what was going on without any particular risk, and we found about half-a-dozen Mutowifs and some eunuchs thus engaged. The latter are privileged people in Medina, and are treated with great respect, while the Medanis are not accustomed to being dictated to in their own town, which accounted for their being there in defiance of orders.

The rifles used by both sides, as well as nearly all the guns, fired black powder, and the progress of the engagement could therefore be traced much more easily than is usual in modern warfare. In South Africa it was generally very difficult to get a correct idea of the position and movements of the opposing forces at any distance from the scene of action. Here, however, the long lines of smoke indicated their respective positions clearly as though marked on a map.

When we arrived the Turkish troops had advanced about three miles across the open plain and were engaged with the Bedou holding the scattered kopjes and groves beyond. The former seemed to be firing volleys and using a lot of ammunition, the latter merely sniping as opportunity offered. The artillery maintained a desultory bombardment, and seemed to me to be making rather good practice. Percussion shrapnel and common shell

were employed—I never saw a time fuse. Some distance to our right was placed a pair of guns firing smokeless powder. I had no opportunity of examining these at close quarters, but they were evidently pieces of some size.

It was difficult to see what good purpose these operations were expected to serve. Shell-fire at such ranges could hardly be effective, and it did not seem intended to push home the attack. Some of us suggested that the only way to secure any decisive result would be to advance into the date plantations, drive the enemy out, and occupy permanently the ground beyond. The officer in charge remarked that such was the general opinion, but unfortunately no one seemed very keen on doing it. In point of fact, the troops were mostly raw conscripts, and no match for the enemy at anything like close quarters.

We remained here for several hours, during which no perceptible advance was made, firing an occasional round at any parties that appeared in range. We knocked down some date-trees, but I don't think anything else was much the worse for it. Abdul Wahid and the eunuchs, who of course knew all about it, treated us to long dissertations on tactics and strategy generally, and the present campaign in particular—if it may be dignified by such a name. I began to wonder what would happen when they retired, which, obviously, they would have to do soon. It seemed most unlikely that they would be allowed to do so unmolested, taking into consideration the known character of the enemy and the nature of the ground.

Thinking that we should get a better view from the gate facing the station, we climbed down the front of the wall, which was here somewhat broken, and walked along till we came to a side gate, by which we entered the town.

then we cut across till we struck the main street leading to the station. We found the great gate open and a large crowd of people assembled there watching. The half-finished buildings had been roughly fortified and were strongly held, as also was the gate itself and wall adjoining. A couple of guns had been mounted over the former. Seeing by their dress that a small group sitting on a bit of rising ground about a quarter of a mile beyond were civilians, I saw no objection to going forward and joining them. Just outside the gate, between it and the station, were several small cafés where many people were sitting. We found the group to be five Mutowifs, who told us they had been there since the morning. They were not favourably impressed by the conduct of the operations; nothing had been done, they said, and a stream of killed and wounded men had been passing all day. We ourselves had encountered four on the way out. One of these men, who was armed with a rifle, told us he belonged to the local volunteers, but had overslept himself and had been left behind that morning. These volunteers had been raised some days before from among the townspeople, and rifles had been issued to them. They were supposed to help in guarding the walls at night and during the day to hold any ground that it was considered ought to be occupied. The idea was to keep them as far as possible from actual contact with the enemy—owing to the peculiar state of affairs I have already described. They were given no uniforms, and they refused to alter in any way their usual attire, which, though picturesque and comfortable, is not adapted for campaigning. The Medina town guard going into action resembled a crocus bed in April, and I should say was about as easy to hit. I asked whether they would accept

me as a recruit, and was told there would be no objection. Our friend offered to take me round and introduce me to the sheikh of his quarter the following day—in spite of Abdul Wahid's indignant remonstrances.

It was now past five o'clock, and the retirement had commenced some time before. So far as we could see the troops were retreating in good order and in the conventional way—sections of the line doubling back, then turning to protect by their fire the retreat of the remainder.

When the line was within half a mile of us we began to think it time to get back; but so well ordered did all appear that there seemed no particular hurry. Suddenly we saw a wild commotion among the people outside the cafés, who had sprung to their feet and were crowding back through the gate. A man sitting there drinking his coffee had been shot through the head and killed instantly. Almost simultaneously the regular sound of volleys changed to the rattle of independent firing, mingled with the peculiar double reports that rifles make when fired at you, and the swishing of bullets overhead. At the same time the men holding the station buildings were seen rushing to their places.

It became obvious that our present position was too warm to be comfortable. We started therefore to go back, but had not reached the gate before the firing swelled suddenly to a roar. Looking back we saw that the troops were now fairly running for it. The rising ground behind was alive with puffs of smoke, and while we hesitated a crowd of men on camels and horses came galloping over the sky-line blazing off their guns and yelling furiously. The wildest panic now prevailed among the crowd still trying to get through the gate. Several were hit, others were injured in the crush. The guns over the gate were

firing case—or, more probably, reversed shrapnel—and this, with the musketry from the wall and other defences, stayed the rout and stopped the Bedoui charge, while giving the defeated troops time to reform. With the exception of the man with the rifle, who bravely stayed behind to take his share in the fight, we ourselves took advantage of a lull that followed to get back through the gate, which was now clear.

Within the gates there was a scene of great confusion. Orderlies were galloping hither and thither, bugles were sounding the "alarm" and "fall in at the double." The crash of musketry and roar of the cannonade were drowned, as we passed through, in the tremendous concussion of the two pieces fired almost immediately over our heads, which smothered us in dust and smoke. A regiment with fixed bayonets doubled past us and deployed before the gate. It was getting quite exciting.

Few pilgrims were to be seen, for most of them had had the sense to go home and leave the Medanis, the Turks, and the Bedou to settle their own differences. Such of the townspeople as had rifles, however, were hurrying up to bear a hand in the defence. It was the general impression that the Bedou meant to storm the town.

Night was now fast coming on. The enemy made no further attempt to charge, but contented themselves with rifle fire at as close quarters as they could attain. A little hand-to-hand fighting occurred in some places, as we heard afterwards.

When darkness brought comparative safety the killed and wounded, as many of them as could be collected, were brought in. The casualties on our side were evidently not inconsiderable, and the '74 Mauser makes nasty wounds at close quarters. Of course we only retrieved those who

had fallen near the gate. Among them were several of the volunteer "town guard."

I hold no brief for the people of Medina, and was till then rather inclined to share the Bedoui view of them. But nothing in their behaviour in this emergency could be held to justify the charge of effeminacy or squeamishness at the sight of bloodshed. The old fighting spirit though atrophied was evidently by no means dead. Anger and desire for revenge seemed the dominating emotion in those around me, and many proposed a general sally to see if we could not get to handgrips with the enemy.

When it became quite dark and the prospect of an immediate assault was over, the best thing to do seemed to be to go home. Abdul Wahid, who said he objected to all bloodshed, particularly his own, on general principles, had gone off some time before. On the way back I encountered Masaudi fully arrayed for battle; he had been looking for me in various likely places and had feared that I might be still outside the gate. We returned together to the house to find our host and Abdul Wahid preparing supper.

Iman left us afterwards to help man the wall, as every respectable householder was doing that night. Masaudi and I offered to accompany him, but having no rifles allowed ourselves to be dissuaded. Being very tired, I slept peacefully in spite of the cannonade which continued through the night.

In the morning we found that the Bedou had drawn off and resumed their former sniping of the defences at long range. They had, of course, removed their thousands of killed and wounded. The enemy always do. Three prisoners were all we had to show for the operations of the previous day. These were beheaded, and their

heads stuck up over the Damascus gate as a warning to all who should dare to defy the majesty of the Sultan's Government. Unfortunately, even had the rebels been furnished with powerful glasses, they could scarcely have recognized them, and as no one else seemed to take much interest in the trophy, they were taken down and buried in the Market Square, the ground being then defiled by the "street arabs," who were hugely enjoying the whole affair. This last proceeding struck me as childish and rather insanitary. I remarked as much to another bystander, who said, "Very true, but it will annoy the Bedou when they hear about it." Thus far I agree with him—that if in war any measures which serve that purpose, short of actual treachery, were considered allowable, it would be much more satisfactory in the long run.

Whatever may or may not have been the Bedou losses, on this occasion there was unfortunately no doubt whatever about our own—though I was never able to get at the exact figure. Estimates varied from a hundred to a thousand. I should put them at two hundred at a rough guess, and there would be a very high proportion of killed, for all the wounded left on the field were murdered during the night.

So far from any discouragement being evident in consequence of these events, there was now a regular fever for recruiting among the inhabitants. Every one volunteered and most were given arms, for the authorities were by now thoroughly alarmed for the safety of the town itself. The pilgrims of course stood aloof. This quarrel was no concern of theirs. The Mutowifs, however, began to assume a very warlike appearance—bandoliers, bayonets, pistols, and daggers being fastened about their persons wherever there was room. The volunteers made

some sallies on their own account during the next few days, and were several times engaged, when I am told they fought very well. Such at any rate was their own opinion.

Masaudi and I were unwilling to be left out. In vain Iman protested that we were in no way concerned in the trouble and foolish to involve ourselves in it. Having by this time made fairly certain that there was no one in Medina who knew us both by sight, I was no longer nervous of being seen about with him. We asked various people what we ought to do in order to enlist, but as few other pilgrims were doing so, no one knew to whom we should apply. Eventually we ran across one of the Turkish officers who had travelled with us from Damascus and asked his help. Hearing what we wanted, he took us round to headquarters and managed to procure for us an interview with the Staff officer charged with the enlistment of volunteers. This latter was sympathetic and rather amused, but regretted that he could do nothing as strict orders had recently been issued prohibiting the acceptance of any volunteers from among the pilgrims, who were to be prevented as far as was possible from taking part in the fighting. The reason for this was obvious. If pilgrims were allowed to take part in the operations the Bedou would have a reasonable excuse for regarding them as belligerents, and might begin by holding up the train or caravans. The Turkish Government is very anxious to appear before the rest of Islam as the effective authority and guarantee for peace and safety of life in Arabia, and the protector of the pilgrims during their stay there. It would be a serious scandal if not only were large numbers of pilgrims prevented from reaching Medina at all, but many of those that did get

there were killed or wounded. The survivors would be likely to take home with them an unflattering opinion as to the capacity of the Sultan to be guardian of the holy places.

In any case he would not do what we wanted: which was, that he should give us a letter to one of the sheikhs of the quarters, directing him to enrol us. He said, however, that we need not take it to heart, for negotiations had that morning been re-opened, and in all probability there would be no more fighting. With this we had to be content.

These negotiations were actually started, but came to nothing. The Bedou demands were out of all reason, and after their last success the arrogance of their chiefs was said to be unbearable. However, no further fighting of a sensational nature took place during our stay in Medina. The enemy confined their activities to sniping at the walls and the Turks to artillery fire and the occupation during the day of commanding ground in the vicinity of the town.

Some days later the new governor arrived, together with a couple of regiments and some more guns. We watched them detrain and I was struck by their smartness and soldierlike appearance—very different from the troops we had hitherto encountered. They were armed with the ·256 Mauser and sword bayonets.

The next week passed uneventfully, but for a squabble with a certain Mutowif named Hamza, a young Kurd of well-to-do parents, whose speciality was Persia, and who usually conducted a good-sized party of visitors from that country during the season. His father kept, I believe, a very nice house for their accommodation.

The Persian, I must explain, has in Oriental countries

the same reputation as the Englishman on the Continent. He is supposed to be always a millionaire, and to pay double for everything. Partly for this reason, and partly owing to the Sunna and Sheia controversy, which still causes occasional unpleasantness, it is not very unusual for Persians to pretend to be Arabs during their stay in these places. Hamza and his father kept a bookshop in the street leading to the Haram, at which I had several times made small purchases. For some reason they got it into their heads that I was a Persian, and that Abdul Wahid by acting as my guide was robbing them of their lawful perquisites. Hamza was always bothering me about this whenever we met, and talking to me in Persian. In vain I assured him that I did not understand a single word. One day when passing their shop, very foolishly and by way of a joke, I called out the Persian greeting "Khuda ha'fiz," the only two words I knew. My pronunciation must have been unexpectedly good, for from that moment nothing would convince them that they were wrong in their original surmise. It so happened that in consequence of troubles in Persia itself, the quarrel with the Bedou, and the fearful outbreak of cholera the year before, very few Persians had come to the pilgrimage, and Hamza had got no one at all. This of course made him all the more annoyed at being, as he considered, defrauded. As a matter of fact I rather liked him, and would gladly have stayed with them had it been possible. One day he stopped Abdul Wahid in the street and began violently abusing him. The latter told him to go to blazes. After this he and his father were constantly pointing me out to people, and otherwise making themselves objectionable, and me conspicuous, in a manner that obviously had to be stopped.

After consultation Abdul Wahid and I decided to take the bull by the horns. We went down to their shop and talked to them. I said my visit was being spoilt by this continual pestering about belonging to a country I had never been to in my life, and about a language of which I knew no more than they had heard. I said I was going straight to the Sheikh of the Haram to complain, and to him I should show my passport: but where I came from was no business of theirs! With that we walked off, apparently to carry out what I had threatened. As we anticipated they at once knuckled under. Hamza ran after us, apologized profusely, and implored me to return. When I at last consented, his father also explained that they had meant no harm, and if I really assured them I was not a Persian they of course accepted my statement—and so on. Had I done as I said, Hamza, as he well knew, would have got into serious trouble. The sheikh was not the sort of man to put up with any nonsense, and it pays the authorities to supervise these guides and give ear to complaints concerning them. In my own case of course the threat to complain was merely bluff.

We eventually made it up, and I promised to let Hamza take us round some day to the Bakeia and the other places, as soon as it was possible to get there.

We were able to do so a few days later. No fighting had occurred on that side of the town lately, and in response to many urgent requests the gates of the cemetery were at last thrown open. Hamza came for us after lunch and we visited with him all the tombs there. A description of them would be tedious. The outstanding feature of them all is the "shoddy" character of the buildings and state of neglect in which they are allowed to remain.

This is indeed surprising when one reflects on the millions that have been spent on religious edifices in other Moslem countries—the magnificent mosques of Cairo and Damascus, the golden spires of Kerbela, and the profuse extravagance that Indian travellers describe. Yet here, in the very birthplace of the religion, the tombs of the Prophet's wives, Ibrahim his infant son, Hassan his grandson, and many others whose names are never mentioned without a blessing, are very inferior in size and beauty, and kept in worse repair than many private vaults in other places. I can offer no explanation of this anomaly.

We found Hamza a very good guide. He recited the various "Ziyarahs"[1] for us with good voice and pronunciation, and was able to answer every question we put to him. He had an annoying and intermittent stammer in conversation.

We were not allowed to enter the tombs of any of the women, for they were "occupied" by female guardians who had established themselves there to prevent such impropriety. By them we were compelled to perform our visitations standing outside. The whole round took several hours.

The following day Hamza took us to some places of interest on the other side of the town—among them the tomb of Abdullah—the Prophet's father. There is a difficulty here which has caused some trouble to the Moslem doctors. Seeing that Abdullah died when the Prophet was a child, obviously he could not have been a Moslem—and he was in fact an idolater. Ought he therefore to be treated as a saint? Hamza told us that the real truth was that the Prophet had prayed one night that his father might be saved. On the instant he stood

[1] Recitations on visiting a tomb.

before him alive, repeated the creed, accepted his son's religion as the one true faith, and returned to his tomb. Mohammedans, by the way, believe that everything must die before the Day of Judgment, including even the Angel of Death himself. Nothing in the present universe is permanent, except the deity.

We told Hamza that this very indigestible bit of information was a little more than we could comfortably absorb. He replied that he did not believe it himself, but that it was a pretty story, got over the above difficulty, and could not at any rate be disproved. Therefore why bother? His comments often displayed a certain philosophy, and were not infrequently rather witty.

We went on to see the remains of the celebrated trench dug by the Prophet's followers for the defence of the town during his war with the Koreish. Most people profess to be very sceptical about this, but like Hamza, I see no particular reason for disbelieving in it. It is unlikely that the site of so memorable a work would be forgotten.

Another day we visited two small mosques about a mile from the northern gate. Here we ran some risk of attracting some hostile marksman's undesirable attentions, but nothing happened. In one of these mosques is buried a cousin of the Prophet, whose name I have forgotten; in the other he used to pray the evening prayer after watching coursing matches, an amusement to which he was apparently much addicted. Mohammed may add to his other distinctions that of being the only prophet who was anything of a sportsman—and in the best sense of the word, for he strictly prohibited all gambling on the results of the races.

Hamza was much addicted to blacking the inside of

his eyelids with "kohl," a form of powdered antimony, which was a favourite trick among the Arabs even before the time of the Prophet, who himself is said to have used it.[1] They say it is an excellent preservative of the sight and preventive of ophthalmia. I tried it several times myself, but eventually came to the conclusion I was looking too much like a chorus girl. Abdul Wahid applied an enormous quantity and nearly blinded himself. He then tried to wash it out with a sponge, and thereby coloured the whole of his face a bright purple, which he spent the rest of the day trying to scrape off with a piece of bath brick with only partial success, as the stuff sticks like death.

We had now been three weeks in Medina and began to think of moving on. We had originally intended to travel to Mecca with the Syrian mahmal, or, in case we got tired of it before, with any caravan that might be going. In ordinary years there are caravans at this season every few days, but in consequence of the war none had started since our arrival and in the opinion of many people none were likely to. It was even said that the mahmal would go round by sea, a thing never before known to happen.

All this made me rather nervous about remaining in Medina. I had a strong suspicion that the Bedoui attitude of neutrality as regards the pilgrims would not last much longer, especially if any aggressive operations were undertaken by the newly arrived troops—of which there was much talk. We might at any time find ourselves

[1] Mohammed is related to have said that the "kohl stick" is one of the three things a man should refuse to lend to his friend; the others being his toothbrush and his wife. The origin of this little joke no doubt dates back to high antiquity.

really besieged and unable to get out at all. I by no means fancied missing the pilgrimage to Mecca which was my principal *objectif*.

Several courses were open to us: we might wait at Medina and take our chance of a caravan to Mecca, or go with a caravan to Yembu and from there by sea to Jiddah; or we might return to Damascus. The last had the advantage of being safe and certain, but I did not much like the idea of the train journey over again, nor did I want to miss the experience of caravan-travelling in Arabia. There was talk of a caravan leaving for Yembu in the near future, but nothing definite was known about it. Every one whom we consulted advised us differently. Some laughed at my apprehensions and assured us that it was inconceivable that we should be prevented from making the pilgrimage. There was a limit even to Bedoui audacity. Others advised us to get out while there was yet time.

Events, however, took place which hastened our decision. Masaudi came back to the house one day at lunch-time bringing tidings of a distinctly unpleasant nature. Standing in the mosque just before the noonday prayer, he had suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder, and turned to find himself face to face with a party of five Mombasa Swahilis, all of whom knew him intimately, and what was worse, two of whom knew me, having been several times to my house in Mombasa on business connected with land purchase. Of course he was overwhelmed with greetings and questions. When had he arrived, whom was he staying with, how had he got on in England, and where had he left me?

Masaudi displayed considerable presence of mind. He had left me, he said, in England. Having saved money,

he thought he would never get a better opportunity to perform the pilgrimage than the present. Arriving in Egypt, he had signed on as a sort of servant to some rich Egyptian pilgrims with whom he was living. In return for this information they told him they had arrived from Yembu two days before, and were staying with the Zanzibar Mutowif, whom they did not like at all, nor his house either.

After the prayer they all walked back together; Masaudi dropped his string of beads on leaving the mosque. They asked where his house was. He promised to show them, then, half-way up the street, he suddenly remembered the beads, bolted back to look for them, and speedily managed to lose himself in the crowd. Then he returned to the house by a circuitous route.

I was not at first inclined to attach very much importance to all this. I did not think that any of them would recognize me if we met accidentally in the street or mosque. Of course I should have to be very careful, for the future, never to be seen about with Masaudi, and he must avoid bringing them to the house at all costs. Still I quite realized that we were in some danger, and evidently it would not do to travel to Mecca in the same caravan with them. Abdul Wahid, however, took a very serious view. He said our lives were no longer worth a moment's purchase. All along he had been very much opposed to bringing Masaudi for this very reason.

As good luck would have it, that evening the town crier was announcing that the caravan would start for Yembu the next day but one. Here was an escape from the *impasse* that suited us all, and we at once decided to avail ourselves of it.

The next day was spent in preparation. Abdul Wahid arranged for three camels, one of them to carry a shugduf, the other two for luggage. We bought the food we should require—rice, dates, and dry bread. We arranged to take with us Jaffa the Persian as cook, and his brother-in-law Ibrahim, also a Persian, as general servant. I cashed my cheque for £100, paid a few bills and our rent, and bought a rifle and fifty rounds of ammunition. By the afternoon, all being in readiness, we sent for porters to take our luggage to the place where the caravan was parked. The first to arrive no sooner saw the interior of our room than he gave a yell, and rushed headlong down the stairs and out into the street. Astonished at his behaviour, we ran to the window and shouted to him to know what the mischief was wrong. He said he had not been hired to carry a corpse to the cemetery. We gazed at each other in utter bewilderment, then, looking back into the room, a solution of the mystery dawned on us. Our folded tent lying on the boxes did look exactly like a body swathed for burial. We told what had happened to the other porters, who had turned up. They showed great appreciation of the joke, and I have no doubt the runaway has had to put up with chaff on the subject ever since.

We carted our things down to the big square where the caravan was parked, where we were to pass the night. Leaving Masaudi in charge, Abdul Wahid and I returned to the Haram to perform the ceremony known as the "leave-taking." This is practically a repetition of former recitals before the tomb, but it is considered a specially appropriate occasion for private prayers, which, we were assured, would undoubtedly receive attention. Hamza conducted us through the ceremony. At parting we gave

him five dollars, with which he was quite satisfied. He followed us with many good wishes and prayers for our safety, and said he hoped we would stay with him next time we came. As we passed out for the last time I could not help saying to myself that at any rate we were safely out of Medina. As is usual with self-congratulations, mine were premature.

It was dark, but some shops were still open. As we walked down to our bivouac it suddenly occurred to me that I would buy some chocolate. Telling Abdul Wahid to wait a minute, I walked back to a shop where I had seen some. Standing in front of it were two guides. As I came up one of them remarked, "See, here he is." I myself was evidently the subject of their conversation, whatever it might have been. While I was buying my chocolate I heard them carrying on a whispered consultation. As I turned to go they came up to me. One said, "Look here, what country *do* you come from? We know you are not a Bagdadi! Why all this mystery about it?" (My translation is of a somewhat free order.) I said, "What the devil has it got to do with you?" "Much," they replied. "Each of us has a right to a particular country, and we want to know which you belong to." I told them so far as I was concerned they could go on wanting, and walked away. They came after me and one caught me by the arm. I threw him off roughly and told him what I thought his mother must have been, while he expressed his opinion that the whole of my ancestors were unbelievers and addicted to a certain vice. Though the first part of this accusation was quite true, I began to get angry. A passage of arms appeared imminent, and weapons were drawn on both sides. At sight of my automatic Colt the bystanders

hurriedly took cover, being aware, possibly by experience, of the somewhat comprehensive effects of that weapon. At this juncture, by the special mercy of Providence, our late landlord Iman came down the street accompanied by two friends, and promptly intervened. A crowd was fast collecting, but fortunately the original cause of the quarrel had been by now quite lost to view. In the end we were read a lecture on the evils of brawling in the streets, and reminded that if the watch happened to come along and find us thus engaged, we should suffer for it.

Having once cooled down a little, we were neither of us sorry to forgo our "satisfaction." They knew perfectly well they were in the wrong, and anyway, a beating and imprisonment would scarcely be compensated for by the knowledge that I was getting the same, to say nothing of the chance of absorbing some ·450 expanding bullets into their systems during the struggle. So we drew off snarling at each other.

On the way to the square Iman asked me what the row had been about. I told him, and he seemed rather puzzled. No doubt by this time he had an inkling as to the true state of the case.

Arrived at our belongings, we took leave of him and his son Ibrahim. I had given Masaudi a silver watch to present to the latter, who was quite delighted with it. I think they were all really sorry to part with us, and Iman very kindly said he only hoped he would have the same good fortune with his next tenants.

Masaudi, relieved of his sentry-go, hurried off to the Haram to perform his final devotions. On his return, we ate a frugal meal and turned in as best we could.

The square was now crammed with luggage, camels, shugdufs, and the other apparatus of a caravan. There

was scarcely room to move about, and I was at a loss to imagine how we should get off in the morning. It looked as if it would take days to sort out.

We passed a very cold and uncomfortable night. The shugduf in which I was sleeping, or trying to sleep, collapsed at about 1 a.m. A shugduf is a sort of howdah that fits on to the camel's back. It consists of two trays on a wooden framework, surmounted by a roof of canvas or sacking. The two passengers sit or lie one on each side, the luggage fitting in between. The motion of the whole arrangement as the camel lumbers over the rough veld is comparable only to a torpedo boat in a hurricane. It is necessary for both passengers to be approximately the same weight and to get in and out at exactly the same moment—otherwise the whole thing tips over. If the camel stumbles, or comes down, or kneels down unexpectedly, the travellers leave hurriedly over the bows, accompanied by their belongings in a sort of cascade. When the shugduf to which this happens is occupied by a family party, consisting of a fat Turkish official, his wife, and three children, all dressed in the Ihram, the effect is peculiarly exhilarating from the onlooker's point of view. Other kinds of camel furniture comprise, a litter slung on a pole, like a sedan chair, between two camels, fore and aft, and a thing like a tea-tray roped on to the camel's back. The former is used mostly by ladies of means, and is said to be quite comfortable; the latter by people who cannot afford a shugduf. Many travellers ride on top of their baggage, which is really the most comfortable way of all. A few have proper riding camels and saddles, but so slow is the pace of the caravan that there is no real advantage in this.

The luggage is so arranged that the weight is distributed

evenly on either side of the camel's back. Boxes are usually sewn up in sacking covers and roped together, so that it is practically impossible to get at them till the end of the journey.

We were aroused at daybreak by the artillery practice, to which we had by now become so accustomed that we hardly noticed it. Great confusion of course prevailed at first, but in a wonderfully short time, all considered, the camels were loaded up, and we were able to move off. We left the town by the northern gate, and halted outside while the line of march was arranged.

The camels are the property of Bedou Arabs who make their living by letting them out for hire, and conducting them on the road. There is a regular organization among them, supervised by the Government. There is a fixed scale of charges annually agreed upon, which may not be exceeded except in extraordinary circumstances. In each town there are sheikhs responsible to the local authority for a certain number of camels and men. These sheikhs issue tickets to the pilgrims which are collected at the other end and serve as proof of their safe arrival. Complaints as to bad camels or misbehaviour on the part of their conductors are made through the same channel. These arrangements reflect no little credit on the Turkish administration, and have done much to diminish abuses. This particular year, however, they counted for very little, owing to the chaos caused by the disturbances in progress.

The big caravans in ordinary years, more especially the one convoying the mahmal to Mecca, are very well organized. They have a large escort with guns, scouts out by day, and outposts at night. A proper market is established every evening in the middle of the camp,

where food and firewood are sold according to an approved tariff. A magistrate tries and punishes criminals on the spot, and decides disputes. Any pilgrim having cause to complain of his camel-men finds a ready hearing. Halts are made for prayers and bugle-calls give timely warning of the hour of starting. Everything is done with almost military precision. These caravans, however, are so expensive that they are available only to the wealthier class of pilgrims. Twenty or even thirty pounds per passenger may be asked.

Our caravan was of a very different description. The travellers were nearly all poor people, for the reason that few others had come to Medina this year, and those that had were going round by Damascus rather than face the journey to Yembu. This particular route is supposed to be the worst in the Hedjaz, that is to say, it is the most dangerous and involves the hardest trekking. It has, on the other hand, the merit of cheapness, and does not involve wearing the Ihram, which is necessary if leaving Medina for Mecca. We had no escort or police arrangements of any kind, and no market. Each traveller had to carry his own provisions and water. We must have numbered about five thousand camels all told. In charge of the whole was a Bedoui sheikh, with about twenty retainers, on fast riding camels. All the camel-men, of whom on the average there was one to every three camels, were armed with rifles and swords. Most of the pilgrims carried weapons of some sort.

CHAPTER V

MEDINA TO YEMBU

We finally got off at about ten o'clock, after having been inspected by a Turkish officer who countersigned our tickets. Ibrahim's father, who had many times travelled this route, came with us as far as the gate and gave us sound advice at parting. He warned us to be very careful with the camel-men, and not to be bullied into giving them more money than the deposit they had already received, and on no account to leave the caravan on the march or get near the outskirts of it at night. He recommended us to put all our belongings inside the tent and sleep with one eye open and weapons handy.

We found ourselves very nearly at the head of the caravan; at starting there were not a dozen camels in front of us. Behind us the line stretched for miles. We had been going an hour before the last part had left Medina. Masaudi and Abdul Wahid occupied the shugduf, I rode the best of the baggage-camels, the one carrying the most comfortable load. Ibrahim and Jaffa took it in turn to ride the other. Our camel-man, whose name was Saad, was a small, wiry Bedoui, almost black from exposure to wind and sun. His features were of a purely Semitic caste, free from the slightest suggestion of African admixture. But for his dress he might readily have passed for a Boer transport-rider. In Medina he was

all politeness and full of promises of what he would do for us on the journey, but this demeanour very soon underwent a change when once we were fairly out of the town.

The last caravan which had travelled from Yembu to Medina had been forced to make a wide detour across country to avoid a band of robbers that had assembled on the road for the purpose of plundering it. This must have been very unpleasant for the wretched pilgrims, who had to walk for about eight hours at a stretch, the ground being too rough to ride. The road itself was bad enough in all conscience. We could only hope that no such necessity would arise this time, but we were told it was by no means unlikely. About three miles from Medina we turned west, crossed the railway, and thenceforward were slowly ascending. We passed quite unmolested through the enemy's lines; not a shot was fired in our direction, though shells from the forts were bursting less than half a mile to our left. By three o'clock we had entered the mountains and Medina was no longer visible. An hour later we caught another and final glimpse of the dome and minarets of the Haram just appearing through a cleft in the hills.

We plodded slowly and steadily onwards, the road getting rougher and the country more rugged with every step we took. At times we got off and walked for a bit—to stretch our legs and rest from the monotonous and fatiguing motion of the camel. By sundown, when we halted for five minutes for the evening prayer, we had ascended quite a thousand feet. As night fell the cold became severe, and a keen wind sprang up that chilled us to the bone. Still ascending, we stumbled along what was more like the bed of a torrent than a road. For-

tunately there was a good moon or there would have been many accidents.

The pilgrims, who had been very quiet all day, now tried to keep up their spirits by singing, shouting, and firing guns. When first this began, I made sure we were attacked; but apparently it is quite a common way of passing the time. The whole way to Yembu there was a ripple of shots up and down the line. Some people say the idea is to frighten the Bedou robbers by showing them that the pilgrims are armed. I should think it was very much more likely to draw on an attack. By eleven o'clock most of them were too tired and hungry even for this; by midnight I began to wonder if we were ever going to stop. We had been fourteen hours continuously under way and had eaten nothing since the morning except a few dates, which we had to swallow as best we could on the camel's back, a performance by no means easy, and apt to give one violent indigestion.

At half-past twelve the sheikh in charge trotted forward, as we joyfully heard, to select a camping-ground. A few minutes later the camels in front were halted, and we came to a standstill in a wide valley between high mountains. The camp was formed in the simplest way. The leading camels, kneeling down, formed a nucleus around which the remainder collected as they came up, thus forming an encampment roughly circular in shape and packed into the smallest space possible.

Great was now the confusion, and lively the scene. The darkness and silence of our march for the last hour, broken only by occasional curses and lamentations, and the shrill cries of the camel-men to their beasts, was changed in a moment for a veritable pandemonium—the grunts of the camels as they were made to kneel, the

shouts and orders in a dozen languages, the mingled cries, complaints, and laughter. A thousand camp-fires sprang into being as if by magic, and lit up the scene. All busied themselves with the important matter of preparing the much-needed food. Personally I was so numbed with cold that at first I could hardly stand. We had brought, fortunately, a good supply of fire-wood, and soon had a blaze. Our two servants and Masaudi proved very adept at getting things straight, and our tent pitched, while Abdul Wahid got the tea-things out and the kettle on the fire. Saad, the camel-man, and two others conducting a party of Egyptians, had collected their camels in a ring with their heads pointing inwards; they themselves were sitting back to back in the centre, feeding their brutes with hay made into ropes. Each camel got his exact share and no more; all seemed equally dissatisfied with it, and disgusted with the entire proceedings.

These Bedou camel-men astonished me by their indifference to the cold. Clad only in their thin cotton clothes, they showed not the slightest desire to come to the fire, but sat among their camels, laughing and talking, apparently neither hungry nor thirsty, cold nor tired, though they had walked fourteen hours on end, the temperature was near freezing-point, and they had eaten nothing all day. No wonder they are good campaigners. No civilized soldiers could stand this sort of thing for long.

While I was trying to get warm a man stumbled against me and nearly knocked me into the fire. Turning round, I was shocked to see a figure stained almost from head to foot with the blood from a tremendous gash in the head, obviously a sword-cut. He asked for water, and I went into the tent to get him some, but returning with it found

him gone. We heard the next day that no less than six men had been murdered that night and many others wounded, and so it went on till we reached Yembu. These unfortunates were mostly people who could not afford camels, and so had to perform the journey on foot. Straying from the main body in search of firewood, they get picked up by the marauders hanging on the flanks, who seize every opportunity to plunder such stragglers of their miserable possessions, and kill unhesitatingly any who resist.

Within a quarter of an hour of our arrival we were drinking tea in our tent, our beds were laid out, and we ourselves were once more fairly warm and comfortable. Jaffa, the cook, prepared a dish of rice and meat, which was ready in another hour. Seldom have I eaten with a better appetite or enjoyed a supper more. We had however no time to lose if we wanted any sleep, for the word was passed round that we were to start again at dawn, and it was past two o'clock before we had finished.

Scarcely, it seemed, had we turned in when the bustle of preparation around us proclaimed that it was time to turn out. It was still quite dark, blowing hard, and colder than ever. The moon had sunk and the stars were, I think, brighter than I have ever seen them. While packing up we had an altercation with Saad, the camel-man, who violently abused Abdul Wahid because we were not so quick about it as he would have liked. The latter said nothing at the time, but, once we were started, expostulated with him with equal vehemence. The argument lasted several hours, at the end of which Saad consented to be pacified. I was now riding in the shugduf with Masaudi, and Abdul Wahid was taking his turn on the other camel. We traversed the same rugged country,

still gradually going upwards. By ten o'clock it was once more decently warm, by midday it was blazing hot. We started so wrapped up that we could hardly climb into the shugduf, but by the afternoon found a "kamis" quite sufficient covering. One great drawback to this kind of travelling is that if one has to get off for any purpose it is impossible to stop the camels, and one is obliged to remount while they are in motion. To get into a shugduf is not too easy at any time, but when the camel is under way it involves an acrobatic skill which I personally do not possess. The only way is to make the camel lower its head, get a foot on it, then swarm up its neck and so scramble into one's place. Unless the other occupant of the shugduf is very smart in resuming his position at the same moment disaster is certain. While in it alone he must crouch on the camel's back itself, and on no account lean to one side, or the whole blessed thing will capsize.

During the afternoon Saad, restored to good temper, regaled us with a description of the life led by these camel-men. Since he was big enough to walk he had done nothing but trek backwards and forwards over this road. He could neither read nor write, and seemed ignorant of even the elements of the Mohammedan religion. I never saw any of these Bedou praying, and don't believe many of them know how to. Saad had most extraordinary notions regarding the outside world, and was quite surprised to hear that there were bigger towns than Medina. He was intensely interested in Abdul Wahid's description of Berlin and Paris, though I could see that from the first he had put him down as a hopeless liar. Apparently he was under the impression that most Europeans were cannibals. His Arabic was pure and classical

—approximating to the language of the Koran—and his pronunciation of its characteristic consonants such as we despaired of imitating—Abdul Wahid as much as myself.

We journeyed on till 9 p.m., when we camped and the performance of the previous night was repeated. Several shots were fired at the caravan on the march and in camp, but none of them came near us. Some more stragglers were murdered, and a few robberies were committed in camp—the ordinary incidents of the road, which excited no remark.

The next day we trekked from sunrise to sunset, traversing a wide valley between high and precipitous ranges. The whole aspect of this country is indescribably wild and desolate. No trace of vegetation is to be seen, and the rocks assume weird and fantastic shapes, no doubt due to the alternations of great heat and cold, which cause them to split in all directions. Far to the south I saw one range topped by a peak which must have approached the snow-line. The summit was lost in the clouds and guarded by absolutely sheer precipices at least two thousand feet in height. Surrounding it and facing us was a sort of vast amphitheatre, forming a precipitous wall on the inside.

Here, at least, is a field still open to the explorer. This vast territory of Arabia remains largely *terra incognita* even in a geographical sense, while regarding its geological structure, fauna, flora, and other physical aspects, we know scarcely anything. Western travellers, it is true, have passed over a great part of Northern Arabia at different times, so that by coapting their narratives we can gain a fairly just idea of the country, and even map it roughly. Modern science, however, demands more

than this of the explorer, who, to fulfil its requirements nowadays, has to carry and use a certain amount of apparatus which Arabian travellers, hurrying in disguise from point to point, have seldom been able to do. Charles Doughty, in 1875–7, lived among the Bedou of this part of Arabia, and wandered over much of it in company with them. That he was able to do so was due in great measure to the fact that he carried nothing worth stealing, with the result that his journey, though of unique interest in other ways, was somewhat barren of results in the matter of the precise and accurately-recorded information that is of real value to physical science. This remark is by no means intended to belittle one of the most remarkable achievements in the history of travel, but to point out the difficulty that always confronts the would-be Arabian explorer. If he leaves his instruments at home he may come back empty-handed; if he takes them with him he may not come back at all, if indeed he ever gets started.

Much has been made of the fact that Doughty made this remarkable journey without denying either his religion or his nationality. That however is perhaps the least remarkable thing about it. The Bedou themselves are not fanatical on these points, and he did not attempt to enter the forbidden cities. Of course the fact of a stranger being a Christian is always a good excuse for knocking him on the head; but failing it they will soon find another if they want to do so, and will be quite uninfluenced by it if they don't. Once more perhaps I may be pardoned for reminding my readers that we are speaking of the true Arabs of the Arabian desert, for the above remarks are far from being applicable to other parts of the Moslem East.

During the day Saad informed us that it was usual to give "bakhsheesh" at the rate of a dollar a day during the journey, and he further demanded the whole amount of pay still owing to him. I was about to answer this preposterous demand myself, when I was restrained by the tactful Abdul Wahid, who told him we had no money with us, and should not be able to pay him till we got to Yembu, and could cash a cheque. Saad then made various complaints, pretended to be dissatisfied with the food we gave him, and finally threatened to take his camels away and leave us at the next halt. So insolent did he eventually become that I decided to shoot him. Informed of this intention, he suggested that we should have it out with swords when we got into camp. Other pilgrims, overhearing the quarrel, implored us to use no violence. They said that if one of these men were killed the whole of his tribe would assemble to demand blood money and not improbably plunder the caravan. Nevertheless, we could not stand this sort of thing, and I had quite made up my mind that a "scrap" would be inevitable if it went on. To my astonishment, however, Saad was again suddenly all politeness, and so he remained till the end of the journey. When we got into camp he assisted me to dismount and paid me various little attentions, which behaviour I was for some time at a loss to account for. The explanation of this remarkable change was a simple one: Ibrahim, always a cheerful and ready liar, had told him that I was a nephew of the Governor of Yembu. It worked admirably, colour being lent to the statement by the deference shown me by the others.

Many other parties, however, were less fortunate in their dealing with these savages. In various ways they

managed to bully and rob them till they had extorted many times the amount originally agreed upon. Even then they were not satisfied, and were constantly threatening to go off and leave them unless some further *douceur* was given. This threat, if put into execution, as it not infrequently is, involves of course the loss of all the traveller's belongings and his having to walk the rest of the way. To remain at the halting-place after the caravan has passed on would mean certain destruction. The party of Egyptians I have mentioned before were induced to pay the whole of their fare early in the journey. They were then constantly worried for bakhsheesh and annoyed in various ways till they submitted to the extortion. At last, hearing rumours of my exalted station, they came and complained. I had their two scoundrels up and lectured them, threatening at the same time to report their conduct to "my uncle." I should dearly have liked to have ordered their heads to be taken off on the spot, but felt that might be carrying the joke too far. If the behaviour of the camel-men is bad when dealing with pilgrims of Arab extraction, it is far worse with those of other races, especially with those who are unacquainted with the language. Indians especially are given a very bad time, and are generally too poor spirited to retaliate. Of course it sometimes happens that they "catch a tartar," literally as well as metaphorically, and there is a Bedoui the less in the world after some more than usually outrageous piece of insolence. But pilgrims know only too well the usual consequences, and even the most ferocious generally prefer to submit. On one occasion I saw an old Indian, who had persistently refused to hand over the dollar demanded of him, bombarded with stones till he fell from his camel. Several times we had to interfere on behalf

of the weak and decrepit to save them from similar or worse ill-treatment.

The state of affairs here described would not of course exist for a moment in any of the properly organized caravans, and is only to be found on this road, which is little frequented except by the poorer class of pilgrims. This year I believe it was quite abnormally bad: usually the arrangements made by the authorities with regard to tickets and registration of camels are sufficient to check any gross outrage.

We passed through a Bedoui village, consisting of small mud huts and a few date-trees—the first habitation we had seen since leaving Medina. There is a small well here, but insufficient, as we were told, for the requirements of a caravan. The camels would get water at the next camp but one. Our fourth day's march was merely a repetition of those that had preceded it, but we had now passed the watershed and were descending rapidly to the coast. The road was very rough in places, but the camels surprised me by the agility they displayed in clambering over rocks and boulders. I saw no accidents, though we traversed ground that I should not have cared to ride a horse over. We got into camp early—about an hour before sundown. It was the first time I had had an opportunity of inspecting our encampment by daylight, and I was astonished to see that we were the only people who possessed a tent, or at any rate who had troubled to pitch one. There was a large well here, fitted with a windlass, about a hundred feet deep. The water drawn was emptied into curious cup-shaped cavities, lined with sun-baked clay, from which the camels drank. I do not know how many of them watered here—certainly not all.

A row of tumble-down sheds did duty as a market, and here some villainous-looking Bedou were selling meat and dried fish. This is supposed to be a very dangerous place, and we were warned not to go far. The camping ground was of course in a very filthy condition, which was unpleasantly obvious by daylight. The rest, all the same, was most acceptable, and as we were not to start till ten o'clock the following morning, we looked forward to a long sleep—which we duly enjoyed.

We were now to trek straight through to Yembu without another halt, absence of water being the reason alleged. We started at 10 a.m. and travelled without stopping till six the following morning. I rode the spare camel till sundown, and then changed into the shugduf. About four o'clock in the afternoon we emerged from the hills on to a vast level plain, with barely a trace of vegetation, extending to the sea. Shortly after midnight the riding lights of the ships lying at anchor in the roads of Yembu became visible. We arrived outside the wall just before dawn, but in compliance with the usual rule, the gates were not opened till sunrise, so we had to wait. A caravan leaving for Medina was parked outside, ready to start at daylight.

Being, fortunately, near the head of the caravan, we were able to crowd through the gate as soon as it was thrown open. Had we been among the last, we should have been delayed for hours. We passed down a wide street and halted in an open square near the centre of the town. It was uncertain whether we should be able to get a steamer that day, so we decided to take a room where we could rest and get some food, of which we were much in need. Abdul Wahid and I went to search for one, while the others unloaded the camels. The first

few rooms we inspected were in an unspeakably filthy state, and the one we finally agreed to take, at the rate of a rupee a day, was not much better, but we were too tired and hungry to be fastidious. This room was on the ground floor of a house almost opposite the place where we had put the luggage. It had just been vacated by the last tenants; the floor was covered with orange peel and other refuse and was inches deep in dust. In the corner smouldered the remains of a charcoal fire. The morning sun, streaming through the windowless sash, lit up the desolation within, and did not make its appearance any the more inviting. Curiously enough that house impressed us all the same way—as being infected with some pestilential disease. It probably was. It is really extraordinary that no decent accommodation is to be found in these places. Any one starting a hotel here or in Jiddah would be sure of large profits.

We made an excellent breakfast off boiled eggs and hot rolls, but decided to forgo our sleep till we had arranged for our passages. We accordingly went down to the quay, where most of the shipping offices were situated. There were about half-a-dozen ships of various nationalities at anchor in the open roadstead in front of the town. The offices were in a row, and standing outside each door a sort of salesman was proclaiming the merits of his particular steamer, the price of the tickets, and the hour of starting. There did not seem much to choose, so we fixed on one who was vociferously inviting the support of all true Moslems on the ground that his ship sailed under the Turkish flag—an absolute lie, as we subsequently discovered. She was a Greek ship of antique design that had been chartered for the season by a syndicate of Persians. There are no "classes" on these lines

—the tickets are all one price, which varies however every few minutes, according to the amount of competition and number of pilgrims. When there is a likelihood of getting a full complement of passengers, the price goes up; if a scarcity, it goes down. The one object of the owners is to get a full ship somehow. We were anxious to start that day, so before we took our tickets we extracted a definite promise from the agent that we should sail before sunset. As a matter of fact we struck rather a bad time and paid a good deal more than later applicants—to wit, two dollars apiece. We were told that no one would be allowed aboard till the afternoon, which suited us rather well. On returning to the house, we settled up with Saad, the camel-man, paying him the remainder of the fare agreed upon and a very moderate amount of bakhsheesh. Here in Yembu of course we had him at our mercy. I don't know if he ever discovered the little deception arranged for his benefit, but I doubt if he ever conducted a less profitable party than ourselves in the whole course of his mis-spent existence. However, he made the best of it, professed himself satisfied, and went off. Before leaving the subject I may say that the road we travelled by is not the only one between Yembu and Medina. There are at least two others, used at different times of the year, but I was unable to get hold of any useful information concerning them.

We took our luggage down to the quay and, leaving Masaudi in charge of it, went round the markets to replenish our food supply. Yembu is the most tumble-down place I ever saw. The houses are all askew, and the minaret of its solitary mosque stands at an angle that recalls the leaning tower of Pisa. It is also about the

dirtiest place I ever set foot in. The dingy markets are strewn with every kind of abomination, the odours as variegated as they are unpleasant. There are, however, some tolerably good shops where most necessaries of life are obtainable. The town of course is protected by a wall on its landward side, and a large garrison is necessarily kept here. Water is a great difficulty—the supply being limited and very brackish. It is said to be extremely unwholesome, which I can well believe. A distilling plant has recently been put up, and may tend to improve matters.

Our shopping concluded, we looked for a café where we might get a smoke and some coffee. The best we could find was about in keeping with the rest of the town, but we were not by way of being particular just then. We sat down at a small table outside, after asking permission, in accordance with the courteous custom of the country, of a Bedoui sheikh already sitting there. We ordered pipes and coffee. Just then the Bedoui's pipe was brought. He took a pull at it and looked unhappy. "You rascal," he said to the attendant, "I don't believe this water is fresh." "Not fresh?" replied the latter. "Why it was changed the day before yesterday!" This was too much for the sheikh: words failing him, he picked up the pipe and threw it at the waiter's head. The projectile, missing him, passed through the open window and burst inside. I hurriedly countermanded my order and decided to stick to cigarettes.

All considered, notwithstanding, we were inclined to take a more cheerful view of life than we had done for some days. The air was warm, and the sunlight on the blue water was a delightful change from the glare and dust of the desert. It was pleasant to be dressed in

clean clothes and to be at rest again after the fatigue and monotony of camel-travelling. We were disposed to make light of present discomfort in the recollection of past hardships. Moreover, here was the first half of the enterprise accomplished successfully, and the practicability of the whole clearly demonstrated.

Two enormous Turks or Anatolians came and sat down at our table. They really were most ridiculous figures, for they combined the outward appearance of a stage brigand with the benign expression of a family doctor. They had enormously wide trousers, hitched very low round their waists and looking as if they might fall off at any moment. In their belts they carried no less than three revolvers apiece, of about three-quarters of an inch bore, some cutlasses, and a few miscellaneous daggers. They were both well over six feet in height, very stout, with huge grey beards and whiskers. We pretended to be horrified at their ferocious appearance and implored them not to quarrel. When at last they comprehended the joke, which was not for some time, they literally roared with laughter, slapping us continually on the back. They then invited us to join them in a glass of lemonade.

We lunched off fried fish, which was very good, like all Red Sea fish; its flavour was not impaired by the fact that we had to eat it with our fingers, standing behind the wheel-barrow from which it was sold—but the flies were a nuisance. They were in millions. Several times we went to the shipping offices to ask when we could go aboard, and were continually put off on one pretext or another. We began to suspect that they did not mean to start at all that day, in which we were right. Several other ships put to sea in the course of the afternoon, but about four o'clock our people announced that they

were not allowed to sail till the next day, and so we could not go aboard till the following morning. This of course deceived nobody—it being perfectly obvious that the only thing preventing them was lack of passengers, and that they simply proposed to wait until they had filled the ship to her utmost capacity. We were told it might easily be three or four days before we got off, and we had no remedy. There appeared to be nothing for it but to take another room and wait, as we could not very well camp on the quay. We abused the shipping people till we were tired, and then engaged a room in a house adjoining their office. This was certainly cleaner and better than our first venture, but it cost another dollar. This was not of very great consequence to me, and we had so much time on our hands that I did not greatly care if we were detained in Yembu a day or two. We wanted a rest. Not every one, however, was so fortunately situated. They could not all afford to throw dollars about for accommodation they had already paid for. An angry crowd began to collect in front of the office, demanding that the ship should start. I was half undressed in our new quarters, intending to take a bath, when sounds of a tumult without brought Masaudi and myself to the window. We saw that the office was besieged by an infuriated mob of passengers, who were all shouting at the top of their voices, while the wretched Persians crowded in the doorway were vainly endeavouring to make themselves heard. In the foremost rank of the rioters, yelling louder than any one, we were astonished to perceive Abdul Wahid.

Fearing that he would get into trouble, we ran downstairs and forced our way through the crowd to his side. We found him in a state of wild excitement and apparently regarded by the other demonstrators as their leader. At

his suggestion we seized the Persians, with the exception of one whose green turban proclaimed him a "shareef," or descendant of the Prophet, and to whom, therefore, it would be improper to offer violence, and carried them off to the house of the governor, whose aid we proposed to invoke. The governor, however, was most emphatically "not at home." Foiled here, we returned to the quay, and Abdul Wahid, mounting a pile of sugar-bags, proceeded to address the meeting. He wound up an impassioned exordium, constantly interrupted by applause, by denouncing their behaviour as unworthy of Islam. "We had better dealing with Christians," he perorated, "than Moslems who cheat their brethren in this fashion." Murmurs of protest deprecated this revolting comparison; we all felt he was going a little too far. In the end, the Persians gave way; we were permitted to go aboard at once, and they were made to promise faithfully that we should start at sunset.

Once more we had to pack up and move in haste. With some difficulty we got a boat, and after passing a nominal inspection at the quarantine station, rowed out to our steamer, which was lying about half a mile from the shore. When we arrived, about a hundred pilgrims were already aboard, and others were crowding up the gangway, at the top of which we saw the chief of the Persian syndicate directing affairs. No sooner did he catch sight of us than he began a storm of abuse in Persian, to which Abdul Wahid replied in kind. The substance of it all was that we, by heading the riot, had been the cause of all the trouble, and the loss they would incur by sailing with their ship half empty; that we could have our money back, but they would see us somewhere before they let us come aboard. We paid no attention, shoved our boat

alongside and proceeded to carry the gangway by assault. Ibrahim, going first, butted the Persian in the stomach and forced his way past, followed by Jaffa and myself with the hand luggage. This was seized by the syndicate, who attempted to pitch it overboard. Abdul Wahid, however, had by now become a popular hero, and the rest of us shone with a reflected glory. Everybody realized that it was entirely owing to him that the Persians had been brought to terms. A crowd of excited pilgrims gathered to our rescue. Some Moroccan Arabs seized the unfortunate syndicate, and swore that if any of our belongings went overboard, they would be thrown in after them. Willing hands helped to hoist our heavy luggage on deck, and we were conducted in triumph to the best place in the ship, where our mats were spread and our things arranged for us. Ingratitude is not a common vice in the East.

In the meantime Ibrahim had a conversation with the Persians which put an end to further friction between us. It now appeared that I was a near relation of the Governor of Jiddah, and was fully determined to report the whole affair to him on arriving there, having been greatly scandalized by the proceedings to date. This news caused something like consternation among them. Thenceforward they could not do enough for us, in the hope of correcting the unfortunate impression they had made. Between this and the effusive gratitude of our fellow-passengers, we made the voyage in far greater comfort than would otherwise have been possible. I could not help feeling rather flattered by the readiness with which these accounts of my illustrious connections always obtained credence.

The ship, originally a cargo-boat, had been fitted up

expressly for the pilgrim-traffic. The hold was occupied by two strata of decks fore and aft, reached by ladders leading through the hatchways. Being in ballast and very light, she stood high out of the water, and I have no doubt would have rolled abominably in any sort of a sea. Fortunately it was calm as a duck-pond. She soon filled up, and by sunset there must have been quite fifteen hundred passengers aboard, and more still arriving every minute. Every inch of space seemed occupied. I reflected that if this was their idea of a half-empty ship, I should be very sorry to travel in a full one. The Persians excused their failure to start as promised on the ground that they could not leave passengers behind.

The position we had taken up was on the upper deck, just abaft the bridge, and we had about five times as much space as we were entitled to. Jaffa, with a charcoal brazier, managed to cook us an excellent dinner, and we were able to pass a very comfortable night after all. I went to sleep before I had finished my pipe, and knew nothing more till eight o'clock the next morning.

CHAPTER VI

JIDDAH

When I awoke we were getting under way. A violent altercation was taking place over the following question. A party of Magribi Arabs had passed the quarantine and were half-way out to the ship when one of them died (*sic*). The boat put back, but the shore authorities refused to let them land again. They then came out to the ship, and the Persians utterly declined to take the corpse aboard. They could not throw it overboard because certain ceremonial washings remained to be performed, and prayers said, before it could properly be "committed to the deep." The dispute was as to whether they were entitled to bring him aboard or not. An Egyptian lawyer camped near us was asked to bring his forensic knowledge to bear on this rather nice point. He was of the opinion that the man, having taken his ticket, was entitled to a passage, dead or alive, there being no saving clause in the contract. The tickets, in fact, consisted of slips of paper with the name of the ship and a number scribbled on them, and nothing else. I thought that having expired after leaving the shore he was practically a passenger, and should be considered as having died on board. The Magribis, however, got sick of arguing, and came swarming over the bulwarks, secured a footing on deck, and hoisted up their departed

comrade without more ado. Their fierce brown faces and long knives sufficed to prevent any one from interfering actively. The rumour that the man had died of cholera, which got about shortly afterwards, fortunately proved unfounded.

We left Yembu at half-past eight and soon lost sight of land. The last thing we saw was a caravan just starting for Medina, the long line of camels trailing for miles across the sandy foreshore. Another quarrel broke out almost immediately over the question of water-supply. It is an understood thing that drinking-water in reasonable quantities is supplied free on these ships. Our Persians wanted to sell it. In the end, the passengers crowded on to the bridge and threatened to throw the whole syndicate into the sea if it was not issued at once. The captain, an enormously fat Egyptian, then interfered, and insisted on a free allowance being made, to which the Persians had to consent. We declined to take any part in this disturbance, being quite satisfied with things as they were.

There was one Western European on board, a doctor, I think, and an Englishman by the look of him. He remained in the chart-house with the captain, so that I only saw him at a distance. When we arrived at Jiddah he made a sort of formal inspection of the decks, so I concluded that he was connected in some way with the quarantine arrangements.

At about half-past four in the afternoon the syren was blown to announce that we had reached the latitude at which it was necessary to exchange our ordinary clothes for the Ihram. This garb is obligatory on all travellers approaching Mecca, on attaining a certain distance from the holy city, and it must be worn thenceforward until

they have performed the circuit of the Kaaba and kissed the black stone. It must also be worn during the three days of the pilgrimage itself. Some people wear it during the whole of their stay in Mecca as a self-inflicted penance, and a few also when entering the Prophet's tomb at Medina —though I believe this is not allowed by the Shafei sect. The idea is purity and humility; that every one entering God's house shall be dressed the same, irrespective of wealth or rank, as simply as is consistent with decency, and in pure white. The costume for men consists of two cloths, one worn round the waist, the other over the shoulders, Nothing else is allowed—even a belt is, strictly speaking, prohibited, though it is often worn along with weapons. The head is left uncovered and umbrellas are, properly speaking, barred, though invalids or aged people may use them if they wish, and others with no such excuses often do. The loin cloth should not reach much below the knees. The most usual form of Ihram worn by well-to-do people consists of a couple of Turkish bath-towels, made especially long for the purpose, and with these we had provided ourselves before leaving Damascus. Some wear a sort of petticoat and shoulder cloth of linen or cotton instead of towels; it is quite optional. Women wear a long linen robe completely covering them, head and all, provided with a straw mask with eye-holes for the face. Before assuming the Ihram it is proper to shave the head and body, with the exception of the breast and, of course, the beard and moustaches. A person so attired is known as "Muhrim," and to him certain things are unlawful which at other times are permissible.

In such a climate as this the wearing of the Ihram naturally means some hardship, particularly to pilgrims from northern countries not inured to the powerful rays

of the Arabian sun. It is really marvellous that half of them do not die of sunstroke; but it is a simple fact that they don't. Personally, I suffered far more from the cold at night than from the sun during the day, and but for a few blisters on my neck and back was none the worse for it. One of the objections to the direct route from Medina to Mecca is that one has to wear the Ihram nearly the whole way; even the covers of the shugdufs are taken off lest they should afford the prohibited shelter.

Having arrayed ourselves in the manner described we said a special prayer as directed in the little books with which we were provided, and we were then at liberty to take stock of each other and laugh at the comical aspect we presented. I felt very thankful that I had not acquired what is vulgarly known as a "corporation." A party of elderly European Turks close to us looked peculiarly ludicrous, their appearance suggesting members of the Athenæum Club suddenly evicted from a Turkish bath. The utmost restraint imposed by good manners could not prevent my laughing whenever I looked their way, conduct which caused them to shake their heads and lament the decay of courtesy in young men of the present day.

We anchored off Jiddah at eleven o'clock the following morning. It was not possible to approach nearer than about a mile from the shore, and we had to disembark in boats, of which a great number were collected in waiting for us. There were quite a dozen other ships at anchor, among which we recognized some of those we had seen at Yembu. We thought it better to wait till the bulk of the pilgrims had got off before going ashore ourselves, so as to avoid the crowd and possible loss of baggage from getting mixed up in it. Eventually we engaged a small

boat all to ourselves. On landing, we were made to pass before a Government official, who merely asked if we were Arabs or Turks, and made a note of our answer. Arriving as we were from Ottoman territory, our passports were not demanded, neither was our luggage examined. We found a line of Mutowifs waiting on the quay, who put the same query, but hearing we were Arabs, they took no further interest in us. Had we been Turks or Persians we should have been pestered to engage them. It was no longer possible to tell the pilgrim's nationality by his costume, all being similarly attired. I am told that there are special people employed here to watch for any European attempting to enter disguised, but if this is true, which I doubt, they failed in their duty on this occasion—not that this is in any way surprising, for as I have already remarked there is nothing to prevent many Englishmen passing as Arabs, clothed or otherwise.

As we proposed to stay here a few days we took some trouble to find decent accommodation, and eventually obtained three rooms and a kitchen on very reasonable terms in the house of a certain Persian "Shareef," a very respectable and nice old man. As it was now past midday, and as we were too hungry to await Jaffa's rather lengthy preparation of food, we went to a restaurant for lunch. The best we could find consisted of a single room with a long table down the middle. Only one dish was provided, and that consisted of chunks of meat impaled on a long skewer, the whole suspended over a charcoal fire just outside the door, so that intending customers could have a good look at it first. The cook-proprietor, armed with a toasting-fork, stood on the threshold to prevent them submitting it to any more practical tests. As each selected a piece, it was detached and handed to

him, along with a plate and piece of bread. The table d'hôte was not expensive—about twopence! The proprietor was a Christian; but a notice over his shop announced that Moslems might eat there without risk of defilement.

Non-Moslems are allowed to reside in both Yembu and Jiddah, provided that they do not go outside the walls. In the latter place there are a few Christian and Jewish merchants, and most of the European Powers are represented by Consuls. They are, however, by no means safe from maltreatment even here. The Consulates are situated all together in the northernmost quarter of the town.

Jiddah is supposed to be one of the oldest cities in the world. It is a very picturesque place, especially as seen from the sea, and, like Yembu, it is in a very dilapidated condition. The high, narrow houses seem tottering on their foundations—the minarets of its mosques are all yards out of the plumb. A slight earthquake shock would reduce both places to a heap of rubble. The streets and markets, though dirty, are as nothing in that respect compared with Yembu. There are a number of good shops and several fairly respectable cafés. The climate though hot is not in itself unhealthy, and is far preferable to that of Mecca, which on a still day is a perfect furnace. Here at Jiddah the sea-breezes keep the air moving, and help to carry away the miasmas arising from the insanitary condition of the streets and habitations. The water, like that of Yembu, is scarce and brackish. Epidemic diseases of all sorts are unfortunately very prevalent.

The Oriental appearance of the place is accentuated at this season by the Ihram, which nearly every one is wearing. It seems strange to see streets and cafés filled

with people clad only in bath towels. At first I could not help feeling positively indecent; but the sensation soon wore off.

We now found ourselves in rather a difficulty owing to my uncertainty as to whether or not a certain sheikh from Mombasa was coming to the pilgrimage. This man knew of my intention to go to Mecca in disguise, and I had originally intended to form one of his party. For various reasons I had changed my plans, and on deciding to go independently of him had judged it advisable to put him off the scent by writing and telling him that I had given up the idea. As a matter of fact, he never for a moment thought I really meant to go. If, however, he was coming I foresaw that it would be practically impossible to avoid running across him in Mecca in the course of a whole month, so I considered it preferable to meet him here in Jiddah and have it out before starting. I intended to hold him to his original promise not to interfere, even if he were not prepared to assist me. I was not altogether confident in his good faith, and realized that we were now facing as serious a danger as any that had hitherto confronted us.

The first thing to do was to ascertain whether or not he had already passed through, and for this purpose I sent Masaudi to reconnoitre the house where Zanzibar pilgrims usually stay. He returned with the intelligence that the sheikh had not arrived; but a letter from him had been received some time previously, and he was expected daily. I decided to wait a few days on the chance of his coming. We were in no hurry, and I certainly preferred to see him here in Jiddah, where escape would be possible if things went wrong, rather than in Mecca, where my life might depend entirely on the view

that various considerations, principal among them his own safety, might induce him to take.

We remained, in consequence, four whole days in Jiddah, not counting the days of our arrival and departure. The second day we took the opportunity to visit the tomb of no less a person than Eve—who is said to be buried here. Her mausoleum is situated some little distance from the wall, and is, as might be expected, in a rather ruinous condition. I was informed, however, that the edifice is comparatively modern, and was not built by Adam—as my informant evidently thought I might suppose. "Our Lady Eve" was apparently about a quarter of a mile in height, so that in her present recumbent position it is rather a tiring walk round. Two small domes, one at each end, mark the positions of her head and feet, while a third, about the middle, indicates the region of her epigastrium. At each of these we were supposed to say the customary "fatiha," though many people decline to prostitute in this manner so solemn a prayer. The women who guard the tomb have to put up with a good many witticisms from their visitors—not always, I am afraid, of too delicate a description. For some reason no one seems to take this sacred monument very seriously.

Our reputation, acquired from the Yembu *émeute*, had outlived the short voyage, and we found ourselves pointed at in the streets and elsewhere as the heroes of that affair, whose public-spirited action had been instrumental in bringing nearly two thousand pilgrims down the coast who might otherwise have been detained at Yembu indefinitely. Abdul Wahid certainly made the most of this—he never was one to hide his light under a bushel—and though I found our sudden popularity rather

embarrassing, I felt I might easily need it all before we saw Jiddah again.

On the fourth day, several ships having in the meantime arrived from the south without bringing further tidings from Mombasa, I decided on mature consideration to chance it, and go on to Mecca. I was rather tired of Jiddah for one thing, and our two servants were beginning to wonder at this unaccountable dallying.

Determined, however, to neglect no possible precaution, I wrote a letter to the sheikh explaining what had happened and demanding from him an attitude of strict neutrality. This I deposited with the landlord of the house where he would most probably stop, with instructions that he was to give it to him if he came, and if not, keep it till I returned. We then selected a Mutowif, and telling the story that had served us so far, offered to engage him. It appeared that he was the local agent of one of the principal Mecca guides, a man called Mohammed Miftah, to whom he promised to write, telling him to look out for us. I have had this rather on my conscience, for of course we never had the slightest intention of doing business with either of them. However, in adventures of this sort, one can't afford to be too scrupulous. We arranged with a Bedoui sheikh for camels to be brought to our house at dawn the following day.

Once definitely decided on our course of action, I think we all felt easier in our minds than we had done for some time. In time of danger it is waiting that tries the nerves; once fairly launched to the attack there is no time for unpleasant reflections, and the necessity for present action precludes vague fears for the future. The day being Friday, we attended the midday service

in the principal mosque—a tumbledown place of no particular interest—and then adjourned to a café, feeling that we had taken all precautions that wisdom or piety could suggest. Abdul Wahid made a vow that if he returned safely he would present three dollars to the poor of Jiddah. We told him we thought he was asking the Almighty to do it rather cheaply, and that he had much better make it a sovereign. To our disgust, when we did get back he utterly declined to disgorge the promised sum.

The next morning we were up betimes, and had all in readiness before daylight. Our camels were punctual, but I was not pleased with their appearance. The one I was to ride looked as if it might die at any moment. The poor beasts have a very bad time at this season, for their owners have to make what they can out of them while it lasts, and consequently never give them a rest. We had hired four for this journey, for we had sold the shugduf at Yembu, and it did not seem worth while to buy another.

CHAPTER VII

JIDDAH TO MECCA

FROM Jiddah to Mecca is a distance of about forty miles and the road is protected the whole way along by a line of block-houses or small forts, almost within rifle-shot of one another. It is consequently safe to travel independently, and there is no necessity to wait for a caravan. There are also small booths at intervals of about a mile, where "light refreshments" are obtainable. Many people send their luggage and servants by camel and ride through themselves on donkeys. I rather regretted afterwards that we had not done so ourselves.

Leaving the gate, we passed out on to a level, sandy plain some seven miles across, terminating in a range of low hills; the string of camels extended right across to these hills and disappeared among them. At this time of year an almost continuous line of camels stretches from Jiddah to Mecca, so vast is the number of pilgrims flocking into the holy city. We had not gone very far when I felt a sinking sensation and found myself deposited suddenly on the ground, fortunately on that part of my anatomy best adapted to take the concussion without injury. My poor camel was obviously finished, whether from overwork or disease I know not. We turned our string out of the road, abused our camel-man for bringing us animals in such a condition, and threatened

to go back to Jiddah and cry off the deal altogether. We had to wait about an hour while he went to fetch another, and we did not finally start till past eight o'clock. Our chapter of accidents was by no means over. Abdul Wahid and I hit on the unlucky idea that we might get down at one of these little cafés, have a smoke and some coffee, and afterwards catch up our camels. The pace of a baggage-camel is barely two miles an hour, while a man can easily walk three. We consumed thus some twenty minutes, and then started to walk on. The air, which had been delightfully cool in the early morning, was now getting momentarily more sultry, and the sun was beating down on the sand in a way that rendered walking over it with bare feet more than unpleasant. We trudged along as best we could, but soon found that, far from our gaining on the camels, they were actually gaining on us. We had by now entered the hills, and the caravan was forced to proceed in single file. We tried to pass the word along to turn out our string, but the pilgrims near us were all Indians and we could not make them understand what we wanted. Fortunately Masaudi, with his usual common-sense, finding that we did not come up, acted on his own initiative and halted in the first open space he came to, where we rejoined him, very hot and footsore, and wiser for the future. I seriously thought at one time that we should have to walk the whole way to Mecca.

At about half-past four in the afternoon we reached the village of Bahreia, which is supposed to be half-way, but in my own opinion is very much nearer Jiddah than Mecca. It consists of a few shops, where provisions and fodder may be bought, some eating-houses, and "kraals" for cattle and goats. There are some date-

plantations near by, and a large fort with a garrison, a company or more, affords the village the much-needed protection. Bahreia lies in an open plain some few miles in width, bounded on the Jiddah side by the range of low stony hills we had just traversed, and running out into sand-dunes to the east. Water seemed fairly plentiful, and was not noticeably salt.

We camped, some little distance from the village, on the cleanest ground we could find; and did not trouble to pitch tents, as the weather was fine and warm. It was our intention to start at dawn the following morning; but our camel-man contrived to upset our plans and forced us to make a night march. His idea of course was to get us to the end of our journey in the shortest possible time, so that he could return to Jiddah for some more passengers. Besides our lot, he had three other camels, which were carrying some Egyptians—a man and two women. He managed to bluff them into starting at eleven o'clock, just as the moon was rising, and then came to us to say that they would not be allowed to enter Mecca unless we came too, since his pass was for a certain number of camels, and if they did not all appear, he would be refused admittance. This was probably a lie, but as we could not very well make the Egyptians offload again, we had to make the best of it and go too. I did not much mind; it was much more pleasant to ride through the warm, still night than in the daytime with the sun beating down on our shaven and defenceless heads. So we saddled up and joined the stream of camels still flowing silently eastward. Day and night it is the same; we seemed drifting into Mecca on a rising tide of humanity. When one considers that in the course of the month perhaps half a million people travel this

road, beside nearly all the food and other stores they require, it is easy to realize the enormous number of beasts that must be employed.

The silence of the whole is strange and impressive. There is no longer any shouting, singing, or firing of shots. Most of the pilgrims are too awed by their surroundings to divert themselves thus, and the camels steal forward over the soft sand without a sound. It is difficult for an outsider to realize the true Moslem's feelings as he approaches Mecca. To him it is a place hardly belonging to this world, overshadowed like the Tabernacle of old by the almost tangible presence of the deity. Five times daily throughout his life has he turned his face toward this city whose mysteries he is now about to view with his own eyes. Moreover, according to common belief, pilgrimage brings certain responsibilities and even perils along with its manifold blessings. Good deeds in Mecca count many thousand times their value elsewhere, but sins committed there will reap their reward in hell.

In the early hours of the morning we passed between two white stone pillars, which mark the boundary of the sacred territory, and thenceforward we were treading consecrated ground. Nothing within may be hunted, or killed at all except for food. All wanton destruction of life is forbiddon.[1]

After passing the line, a special prayer is repeated at intervals, at times in chorus. It runs as follows :

" Oh, my God, I am here, I am before Thee, Thou hast

[1] In the state of " Ihram " the pilgrim is forbidden to take life of any kind; even insects, with the exception of scorpions and one or two others dangerous to human beings, are protected. All loud talking and squabbling are likewise prohibited.

no compeer, Thine is the power and the kingdom. Mercy is Thy attribute. Here I am, here I am. Oh, my God, here I am!"

The last words (Lebéka, lebéka, Allahooma lebéka) are repeated many times over in a sort of wailing key and taken up again and again at different points along the line.

In our half-clad condition we found the early morning air very chilly and were glad when the sun rose. As it got light Ibrahim, who had made the pilgrimage before, pointed out to me the Gebel-en-Noor (mountain of light), a high conical peak surmounted by a sort of beacon, which I am told is really a tomb. This is one of the famous hills overlooking the city. About eight o'clock we passed a few stone houses some distance to the left, which we were told belonged to Mecca, and accordingly we read the prayer appropriate to the first sight of its buildings. Each of us was provided with a book containing all these prayers in their proper order, to be recited on different occasions, such as on assuming the Ihram, the first view of the city, passing the gate, catching sight of the Kaaba, and so on. This particular prayer began:

"Oh, Lord, who hast brought me in safety to this place, do Thou bring me safely out again." A sentiment to which one person at any rate in that caravan said "Amen" most fervently.

Yet though I must confess to having felt a little nervous, I had only to glance round to see that most of my fellow-pilgrims were more frightened still. As we approached the town their excitement became quite painful to witness. For about an hour we travelled on, passing only a few small huts and an occasional Bedoui tent, till I began to wonder where on earth Mecca could be

hidden. Suddenly we turned to the left and saw in front of us a great hollow surrounded by high stony hills, one of them crowned by a large, formidable-looking fort, another by a mosque, and the rest by other buildings that I was at the time unable to identify.

Mecca in fact lies at the edge of the rough mountainous country which extends far into the interior of Arabia. The town is situated in a deep, narrow valley, so completely hidden on the seaward side that one sees no sign of it till almost arrived at the gate. This valley runs approximately north-east and south-west, and seems to extend for a considerable distance.

Abdul Wahid and I decided to go forward on foot to reconnoitre, and if possible find a suitable house before the camels arrived. We instructed Masaudi to trek right through to the farther side of the town and halt in the main street, where we promised to rejoin him. We knew that we should have to run the gauntlet of those confounded guides, who would be in waiting for us as we entered the gate. Walking forward rapidly, we passed the new barracks—a spacious building capable of accommodating several regiments. Then, as we entered the long main street leading to the centre of the town, we found, sure enough, a row of the Mutowifs, as usual tastefully dressed in all colours of the rainbow, completely barring the way. But we were ready for them this time. As we approached, Abdul Wahid called for "Mohammed Miftah," who, as good luck would have it, was not there. We asked several of them about him, and of course they all concluded that we were already "fixed up," and therefore did not bother about us. An old Sheikh, their official chief, stopped me and asked my name. "Ali," I told him. Nationality? "Arab." We then passed on. A

there must have been hundreds of Arabs of that name passing every day, I concluded he must be paid by the Government to ask these foolish questions. At any rate I breathed freely once more, and I may as well say at once that, thanks to this device, we had no further trouble with the Mutowifs. Naturally we made no further effort to find Mohammed Miftah.

We made our way down a wide, straight, and rather imposing street for about half a mile, and then turned into the arcades, which were so crowded that we had some difficulty in getting along. Emerging from these we came to another long, straight road, leading as I was told to Mina, and after about twenty minutes' walk we arrived at our destination. Turning out of this crowded thoroughfare, we came to a district of quiet streets with tall, shuttered houses, some of them possessing small gardens. This, we were informed, was the best residential quarter, specially favoured by Persians and Arabs from the Irak, *i. e.* Bagdad, Kerbela, and the Euphrates Valley. It specially appealed to me as it seemed unlikely that Zanzibar or Muscat pilgrims would be able to afford the rents here demanded. Another advantage was that, in case of cholera, we should be safer here than in the more populous parts of the town. In the epidemic of the previous year this district had escaped very lightly compared with the others. As I had more than £100 left, I thought that further economy was unnecessary, and we might make ourselves as comfortable as possible.

We inspected several houses before finding one that met our requirements. In the end I decided on a suite of three rooms, with a roof garden, in the house of a brassworker, by name Mohammed Saeed. The principal apartment was large, clean, and airy, and the others were

quite passable. I liked the look of our landlord and his son—the latter a man of about twenty-five—natives of Mecca. After much bargaining we agreed to pay £7 for the month, for which we were to have the use of the kitchen, and to be attended by the household slaves should we require their services. Once having come to an arrangement, we found them very hospitable. The women of the house prepared food and coffee for us, while the men assisted us with the luggage, which had arrived with Masaudi and the others. I was rather astonished at getting what we wanted so cheaply, for I had been quite prepared to pay £15, or even £20 for our accommodation. Mohammed Saeed told us he would always let his rooms cheaply to respectable Arabs, who could be trusted to be quiet and of cleanly habits, in preference to obtaining a much larger sum from Indians or Javanese. It appeared that he had a nephew living in Zanzibar, and he was very interested to hear about that country. I mentioned casually that I did not wish him to tell any one where I came from because I was afraid of trouble with the Mutowifs, a request that seemed perfectly natural to him, and to which he promised to pay due regard.

Having installed ourselves thus comfortably, and done justice to a very good lunch served on a table in European style, with plates, knives, and forks, we determined to go to the Haram[1] at once to perform the "towaf," after which we should be able to exchange the Ihram for our ordinary clothes, which we were naturally

[1] The mosque, or Haram, of Mecca is called by Moslems "El-Masgid el-harám" or "Bait ullahi el-harám." The last expression really means "the house of God, the prohibited" or "the sanctified."

anxious to do as soon as possible. Masaudi had a bad headache, so at Mohammed Saeed's advice he decided to wait till the next morning, as the ceremonial involves a lot of running about which in the hot sun is very fatiguing.

Abdul Wahid and I therefore went together, duly performing our ablutions before starting. Twenty minutes' walk brought us to the gate of the Haram, and passing through we found ourselves at last in the great square that encloses the little group of buildings we had come to see. Before our eyes was the Kaaba, its black covering almost startling in its contrast with the dazzling white of the sunlit marble pavement. From it our awe-struck gaze travelled in turn to the plain masonry dome that covers Zemzem's holy well, to the strange objects that mark the "makams" of Mohammed, Abraham and Ishmael,[1] and the curious stone hut of the Shafei sect; and then passed onwards to lose itself in the twilight of the surrounding colonnade.

The outstanding impression left by the whole scene is that of the unusual. It is not beautiful, it could not fairly be called majestic, but it awes one by its strangeness. One feels instinctively that one is looking on something unique: that there can be nothing else in the world the least like it. Whether the *genius loci* resides in the edifices themselves or in their arrangement, or whether it is auto-suggested by the tremendous belief concerning the small square building in the middle,[2] I cannot decide, but it is there. Be the explanation what it may, the

[1] In Arabic: "Ibráheem," "Ismaéel."

[2] Moslems interpret the expression "house of God" in its most literal significance. Many Mohammedans fear to look upwards near the Kaaba on the day of the Hag. By some the flapping of its curtain is thought to be caused by the wings of angels.

effect is almost uncanny. Few pilgrims gaze on the scene for the first time unmoved: the most reckless are awed into unwonted silence.

We prayed the two-rukka prayer ordained for this occasion, and then sat for some time in the shadow of the colonnade looking out across the sunlit space beyond and taking in the scene.

The sides of the square measure about three hundred yards, and the colonnade which surrounds it is about twenty yards in depth.[1] This is supported by stone pillars and roofed by small domes. The floor of the colonnade is of rough-hewn granite; the square is strewn with gravel and traversed by paved walks converging on the centre. The buildings comprise the Kaaba, the Zemzem well, a pulpit, the "makam" of Abraham, a small arch, and the "makam" of Ishmael, the last a peculiar semi-circular wall built on to the Kaaba. The Kaaba itself, which is an almost perfect cube with faces about forty feet square, is built of large granite blocks. It has a wooden door heavily studded with iron, placed about eight feet above the ground, and so necessitating the use of a ladder by those who would enter. It stands in a sort of shallow marble basin, oval in shape and measuring about forty yards at its greatest diameter.

The outer wall of the Haram is of brick, and houses and shops are built on to its exterior face, which from their upper stories overlook the interior of the mosque. There are about eighteen gates altogether, the principal of which, that on the northern side, is reached by a flight of stone steps leading into a small market, appro-

[1] These measurements are by eye, and very roughly approximate. A full description of the mosque will be found in Sir Richard Burton's book, *A Pilgrimage to Al-Medina and Meccah*, Appendix II.

priated to book-sellers' shops, which terminates at the gate itself.

Nothing in the whole pile of buildings has the smallest pretensions to architectural beauty or material value. Stern simplicity and extreme solidity are the keynotes of its design. The Haram is comparatively modern, and the Kaaba itself has been several times rebuilt. Very complete histories of Mecca exist in Arabic.

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We applied to one of the numerous guides standing about to conduct us through the necessary ceremonies, the first of which consists in the walk seven times round the Kaaba.[1] Moving across the square to the edge of the depressed platform on which it stands, we took our guide's hands and joined the throng surging round it. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, the hottest time of the day, and the mosque was comparatively empty. Yet there must have been quite a thousand people going round. Day and night throughout the year it is never quite deserted. The "towaf," as this ceremony is called, would be considered to bring peculiar blessing to any one fortunate enough to be the only person performing it. Some of the earlier Caliphs, Haroun-er-Raschid among them, were in the habit of creating artificially the desired conditions—by turning out every one else—but that was not considered playing the game.

Partly running, partly walking, we made our way round and round, repeating the while a long prayer after

[1] It would perhaps be more accurate to spell these words with an "h," thus: "Mekkah," "Medínah," "Káhah." This "h," however, is mute unless the word is inflected, when it becomes a "t." There is, moreover, the risk of confusion with the other "h" of Arabic, the guttural ح that gives such trouble to non-Arabs.

our guide. At the end of our seventh circuit we had to kiss the famous "Hagar-el-aswad," a stone let into the corner of the building about four feet above the ground. A hole in the sable drapery gives access to it, and I was able to notice that it is heavily encased with silver, and that the small part of it exposed is being actually worn away by the kisses of the devout. This stone is said to have fallen from heaven. It is in fact evidently of meteoric origin.

We now prayed another two-rukka prayer, and then left the Haram to perform the ceremony called the "Saa," which consists in running between Safa and Marawa, two small hills about three hundred yards apart. The line joining them runs nearly parallel with the eastern face of the Haram, and the road between them takes in the adjoining street. Backwards and forwards we went, running part of the way as prescribed and repeating another long prayer all the time. It is on account of these prayers that a guide is so convenient, as he knows them all by heart, and so saves the pilgrim the trouble of either reading them out of a book or improvising them for himself, which latter might be beyond his capacity. The street we had to traverse was thronged with pedestrians, camels, horsemen, and loiterers, so progress was necessarily slow. Our last turn concluded, we prayed a final prayer for the Divine acceptance of what we had done; then a small circular patch of hair was shaved off our heads, and the ceremony was over. We were now at liberty to dress ourselves in our everyday clothes and live like ordinary citizens of Mecca up to the time of the pilgrimage. It was a great relief to get back to the house, as we were both thoroughly tired out, and very footsore. Jogging up and down the rough road with bare feet was

none too pleasant, and I fear that once or twice, happening to hit an unusually sharp piece of stone, I was betrayed into expressions distinctly out of keeping with our occupation. A bath and the change into decent clothes soon put us right and disposed us to take a cheerful view of things in general.

CHAPTER VIII

MECCA

We spent the next few days very pleasantly in exploring Mecca. There was much to see and do, and the crowded markets were a never-failing source of interest and amusement. Mecca is a very much bigger place than Medina: its normal population apart from pilgrims is said to be 70,000, though I should have put it myself at a much higher figure. It must be remembered however that the pilgrims there during the week of the Hag may number upwards of 500,000, and that for most of them house accommodation has to be provided, so that the number of buildings composing the city is greatly in excess of what would normally be required. The streets are, generally speaking, wide and clean, and the houses are nearly all three or four stories high—sometimes more. The principal markets are roofed, as in Damascus, and though they do not compare with those of that place in number or variety, there are nevertheless some very good shops. The merchants cater almost entirely for the pilgrims, most of whom like to take away with them some memento of their visit. There are no local industries whatever, and I quite failed to find anything that could be considered characteristic of the place itself. Goods are imported hither from all parts of the Orient—silks from Syria, carpets from Turkey and

Persia, brass-work from India and Egypt—and all these things "go down" well enough with most of the pilgrims, but are the despair of the traveller who knows he could buy the same things better and cheaper in many much more accessible places than Mecca. Beside the resident merchants traders from all parts of Islam bring their wares to Mecca at this season, and are always certain of finding a ready market and doing a profitable business.

The government of Mecca is peculiar. It is really a semi-independent province of Turkey, under the rule of a "Shareef" who is invariably chosen from certain families descended from Ali and Fatima. This Shareef is considered to be an independent monarch: he lives in a palace, maintains a corps of guards, and has theoretically absolute powers within his own narrow dominions. He is treated with the same ceremony as the Sultan of Turkey or any other Eastern potentate. The lineage of the Shareefial families is supposed to be pure and irreproachable. In them one ought to see the Arab as he was in the days of the Prophet, before the Moslem conquests had introduced the foreign element which in these days is so apparent in most of them. The present Shareef is a man of about fifty, of medium height and good build. He has straight, regular features, a long, grey beard, and a rather dark complexion.

The Turks have a considerable garrison in Mecca, but I was unable to ascertain the exact number of troops. The big fort overlooking the town from the south-west should be capable of accommodating a couple of thousand at least. It looks a formidable work, almost impregnable to assault, but of course not adapted to withstand heavy artillery. Forts become obsolete nowadays almost as

quickly as battleships. The public buildings of Mecca include a court-house, post and telegraph and other Government offices. There are no monuments of interest except the somewhat doubtful relics of the Prophet which I shall describe presently. Beside the Haram there is only one other mosque in the town itself.

The climate of Mecca is not a pleasant one, though it is by no means unhealthy. It is very hot all the year round, and very dry. Rain falls only once or twice a year, but when it does fall it makes up for lost time.[1] The town is so shut in by the surrounding hills that a breeze seldom reaches it, and the heat reflected from their rocky faces greatly increases the glare in the daytime and the stuffiness of the atmosphere at night. In the term of years during which the pilgrimage falls in the winter months it is customary for the Government and the wealthier citizens to remove themselves for the summer to Taif, a place about three days' journey to the south-east, which is much cooler, has a good water-supply, and is comparatively fertile. The soil of Mecca is almost entirely barren; practically nothing, so far as I could see, grows anywhere in the neighbourhood. Its inhabitants depend exclusively on supplies from outside sources, and it was always a marvel to me where the food required by the enormous number of camels came from. There is, I suppose, a certain amount of grazing for them among the mountains.

The only true well in Mecca is the one in the Haram called "Zemzem," and the main water-supply of the town is derived from springs at Mount Arafat. The water is brought to Mecca by a conduit which runs

[1] The year after I was there a sudden cloudburst flooded the Haram and drowned several people.

through the town subterraneously, and is tapped at intervals by pits resembling wells. The water-drawers are a special class; they carry the water in skins and supply houses at a certain rate per month according to the quantity required. The water is of good quality when uncontaminated, and the supply is plentiful, except when the channel gets blocked up, as occasionally happens.

There are several good cafés, which of course at this season do a roaring trade. Fresh food, such as meat, chickens, and vegetables, is obtainable at fairly reasonable prices; but fruit is scarce and dear. Taken all round I think that of the two places I should prefer to live in Medina.

Abdul Wahid and I usually went about together, for it was not advisable for me to be seen with Masaudi. We generally went to the Haram for the midday prayer, and again in the evening, when we performed the "towaf," which, after the preliminary ceremony, merely involves walking seven times round the Kaaba and saying any prayers you wish—or none if you so prefer. During the month we spent in Mecca I was able to examine at leisure the various points of interest, and to obtain much information concerning them which would be out of place here.

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I bought some photographs at one of the bookshops in the short street leading to the main gate of the Haram. The proprietor, a Meccan by birth, told me the story concerning them already quoted. After we had been talking some time he produced some more photographs and some picture post cards of the kind that, in England at any rate, it is not advisable to use for correspondence.

Misinterpreting the interest and amusement I could not conceal, he drew me into the darker recesses at the back of his shop and brought out an album of pictures, the nature of which need not be indicated more particularly. It seemed that amateur photography figured among that sinful old gentleman's more or less respectable amusements.

I relate this incident because it may seem almost incredible, to those who know how Mecca and its people are regarded in other Moslem countries, that such a thing should be possible within a few yards of the Kaaba. Such is the extreme respect in which Meccans are held that in foreign countries people will stop them in the streets to kiss their hands. The veneration for the Kaaba itself often amounts to positive physical terror. Yet here, on the very threshold of the shrine, we find—what I have described.

It will be gathered that my friend the bookseller had to make pretty sure of his ground before indulging his customers with these little exhibitions, and that I must, however unintentionally, have given him an unfortunate impression. The inhabitants of the holy cities, though given to all the vices of the Cities of the Plain and a few more beside of modern introduction, are in fact outwardly the demurest of hypocrites, and most of their visitors carry away the best possible opinion of them. At this season especially they are on their best behaviour, and the more sensational stories concerning what goes on there in public "in the Kaaba" are without foundation.

Sir Richard Burton got into hot water with many people for translating literally and without expurgation the *Arabian Nights*. A perusal of his work will give the reader an idea of how strange a medley of grave and

gay, religion and superstition, high moral precepts and cynically immoral episodes is Arabic literature. The *Arabian Nights*, however, even in its most unrestrained passages, is *petite bière* compared with some other well-known books. One in my possession, entitled very inappropriately *Flowers of the Spring*, was written by a learned doctor of sacred law for the purpose, so he says in his introduction, of affording entertainment and distraction to his pupils when wearied by their arduous theological studies. It begins with a page or two devoted to praise of God and His Prophet—the indispensable *hors d'œuvre* to an Arabic book on any subject whatsoever. A couple of stories from the "traditions," tending to prove that a joke is a good thing in its proper place, are followed by a little commentary on certain obscure passages in the Koran bearing no relation whatever to what has gone before. This is succeeded by an utterly irrelevant anecdote and some verses that would probably have been considered unduly coarse in a pothouse of Gomorrah. Before the reader has had time to recover from this outrage he is back again in some religious controversy, and so the reverend author drags his bewildered followers through four hundred and forty pages of the wildest jumble of theology, history, philosophy, eroticism, and many other subjects; the whole interlarded freely with passages from the Koran, quoted, of course, verbatim, and furnished with all the diacritical marks. Once written he evidently did not trouble to read through his manuscript, for the book abounds in repetition, and one anecdote of an unusually revolting character, which had evidently tickled him considerably, occurs no less than five times.

Yet this incongruous use of passages from a book of

so highly sacred a character that the printed volume may not even be handled without previous ablutions does not appear the least strange or improper to the Arab mind; and to this fact is due the somewhat lengthy notice *Flowers of the Spring* is here receiving, for it is very characteristic of the extreme reverence for the Koran itself and the utter disregard of its precepts so general in Moslem countries. To take another instance: a work on religious observances, regarded as so important that parents are directed to make their children learn it by heart, contains not a single direction as to moral conduct, but is entirely concerned with such matters as the nature of the ablutions to be performed *after* the law has been broken.

The habit of thought engendered by all this leads not unnaturally to what are, as we see them, anomalies strange as the one which originated this digression.

The people themselves in fact are the most interesting feature of the place. All that was said in describing the pilgrim crowd at Medina applies here, only much more so—for while the pilgrimage to Mecca is compulsory for every Moslem that can manage it, the visit to Medina is purely for such as can afford the luxury, and not one quarter of those who come to the pilgrimage [1] reach the latter place. The concourse gathered together for the Friday prayer the week of the Hag is a sight worth the seeing.

Among all the pilgrims of different races daily pouring in, I was most struck by the Javanese. In appearance and manners they seem not unlike the Japanese. They

[1] It is not strictly correct to speak of a pilgrimage to Medina. A traveller to the tomb of the Prophet, or to Mecca out of season, is called a Záir, or visitor.

have the same acquisitive and imitative temperament, are intensely curious regarding everything new to them, and quick to adopt any fresh idea that may seem to them an improvement on what has gone before. In this they stand in strong contrast to the Arabs, and in fact to most Eastern peoples, whose extreme conservatism is what really hinders their progress. But while the Japanese have seemingly agreed to take England as their model, the Javanese endeavour to turn themselves into Arabs. The first thing they do on arriving is to attire themselves in the local costume—which, by the way, does not suit them at all. I am told that there are so many people wearing Arab dress in Java that a stranger might fancy himself in the Hedjaz. Most of them seem very well-to-do, and they spend more money in Mecca than any other class of pilgrims. They often pay £100 for the use of a house at Mina for the three days of the pilgrimage. They are very keen Mohammedans, excellent linguists, and far better informed regarding current affairs than either Arabs or Turks. A certain Abd-ur-Rahman, with whom we later became acquainted, once made some remarks concerning them that struck me as worth remembering. "It is in these people," he said, "and not in the Turks, that our hope for the future lies. They possess all the qualities we Arabs lack and will take from the Europeans their inventions and use them against our enemies just as Japan did with Russia."

I know no more about that part of the East than he does, but it is certainly a fact that in China, Java, and the Malayan Archipelago there are now some millions of Mohammedans, and the faith is rapidly spreading. It therefore seems by no means unlikely that he may be right in supposing that these new Far Eastern branches

may prove a source of strength to Islam in the near future. In spite of the newspapers, Europe remains curiously ignorant in some ways. Our fathers regarded the Japanese in very much the same way as to-day we regard the Zulus. Possibly the next generation will have to reproach our own lack of foresight in some similar instance. Many people display a curious self-complacency in speaking of "governing" and "subject" races. They may be quite right in supposing that the power and civilization of the world will remain for all time centred among the nations of Western Europe, but there is nothing to prove it. Inductive reasoning, based on what we know of the world's history, leads to a contrary conclusion. Their theory, in fact, like that responsible for "race prejudice," rests on a gratuitous assumption.

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We made several friends in the course of the first week, mostly old acquaintances of Abdul Wahid. Among them was an officer in a Bagdad regiment, who introduced us to the above-mentioned Abd-ur-Rahman. The latter was an elderly man, a native of Mecca, who had charge of the special water-carriers that dispense the water from the sacred well and the army of attendants who hand it round in the Haram. It is held to be a specially acceptable form of charity to give money for this purpose, *i. e.* to pay these servants wages in order that all comers may get the water free.[1] So many people have been charitable in this particular way that it has become almost a nuisance. One is pestered every two minutes to partake of the sacred fluid,

[1] Many people have the water brought to their houses in order that they may wash themselves and their clothes in it. This seems to have given rise to the idea that Mohammedans bathe in the well itself. This is an error—they do not. It is about forty feet deep for one thing. The water, however, may be used for ablutions.

which, though it brings wisdom and manifold other blessings, is none the less exceedingly nasty. For some reason this well is unusually brackish, but its water is greatly esteemed by the more superstitious as a panacea for bodily as well as spiritual ills. The most acceptable present to bring from Mecca is one of the curious round canisters containing a pint or more of it—the only objection to doing so being that the unbelieving officials at the first quarantine station will probably chuck it into the sea.

This particular job was apparently a perquisite of Abd-ur-Rahman's family, and had been so for generations. He was a person of some considerable consequence and proved a very useful acquaintance. He ordered a place to be kept for us in the Haram alongside himself and his friends, our mats being spread in the shade of the colonnade by day and outside in the evening. This was a great convenience, especially on Fridays, when most people have to come hours too early in order to get a place in the shade; otherwise they have to sit in the open square, which, at midday, is rather trying. We, however, could turn up any time we liked and make certain of finding a good place kept for us by Abd-ur-Rahman's obsequious retainers—all of which we got gratis but for the inevitable bakhsheesh. Abd-ur-Rahman invited me to his house, which overlooked the Haram, and I twice went to tea with him there. He was very hospitable, and before leaving I had to write my name in his visitor's book, the collection of autographs being one of his hobbies. He turned out to be a misogynist and, what is much more unusual in the East, a bachelor. The fiendish temper of his only sister, who kept house for him, was responsible, he told me, for his dislike of women in general. He had, it seemed, no sympathy whatever with the new constitution or with parliaments

of any sort. He had the profoundest admiration for Abdul Hamid, and much preferred the old regime, to which he hoped and expected that his country would shortly return. We got on rather well together because on most of these points—I mean his political views—I was able to agree with him. On my second visit to him, however, his questions regarding my family and other affairs became so extremely embarrassing that I decided to decline future invitations, feeling that my talents for invention were unequal to further strain upon them.

We several times visited the slave-market.[1] Mecca is, I believe, one of the few places remaining where the trade is carried on thus openly. The slaves, who are kept in special show-rooms, sit, as a rule, in a row on a long bench placed on a raised platform. They are all women; male slaves and eunuchs may be bought by private treaty, but are not exposed in the market. One is ushered into each room by the proprietor, who expatiates the while on the "points" of his wares, and the phenomenally low price he is asking for them. One may, if so disposed, prod them in the ribs, examine their teeth or otherwise satisfy oneself that they are sound in wind and limb, which their owner is usually prepared to guarantee if desired. It is not usual, however, to warrant them free from vice—which would, moreover, merely have the effect of depreciating their value.

In making a purchase one may either close at the price stated or make an offer, which will be noted, and accepted if no better one is forthcoming within a certain stated time. This is a very usual method of selling goods of all kinds in Oriental countries.

The usual price for female slaves ranges from £20 to

[1] This, I believe, has since been abolished.

£100. In the case of Georgians and Circassians with special physical charms and educational accomplishments it is sometimes much more. I asked about these, but was told that none had been brought to Mecca this year owing to the high mortality among them from cholera the year before. All the merchants offered to get me one if I would give an order, and to guarantee that she should be up to specification; but I did not see my way to doing business on these terms. None of those we inspected would I have taken as a gift.

It will be perceived by the reader that the slavery we are discussing is simply legalized concubinage. These young women are sold by their parents, which, though doubtless very wrong in principle, is only the practical outcome of the system under which they live. As has been already pointed out, Islamic society is based on a conception of the relations that should exist between the sexes fundamentally different from, and entirely foreign to, Western ideas on the subject. Slavery in the sense of forced, unpaid labour can hardly be said to exist in these days, for the reason that the slave, if dissatisfied with his lot, can so easily run away.

The behaviour of the girls when undergoing the ordeal of inspection is what might be expected. The younger ones blush and giggle, and pretend to hide their faces. When the customers being shown round are also young and inclined to be facetious, they are quite capable of joining in the fun. The old and ugly, who have long despaired of finding a purchaser, sit forlorn and miserable, gazing dully in front of them and taking no interest in the proceedings. Their tired, hopeless expressions bring one near buying them out of sheer pity, as is not infrequently done by charitable people. But without a household it

is useless to do this; for to give them their freedom is merely equivalent to turning them out to starve. They at once hand themselves back to their former master, with whom they are sure at least of food and a roof to shelter them; and the well-meaning purchaser is merely thought a fool for his pains.

Slavery, as we have seen, is by no means encouraged by the Mohammedan religion. It is barely tolerated, and that only in accordance with certain very strict regulations. A slave having to complain of ill-treatment is sure of immediate redress at the hands of the Kadhi—in serious cases freedom may be given from the offending master. The law looks after slaves very much better than it does ordinary servants in other countries. Of course, abuses occur; but they are less the fault of the law than of its administration. The one idea of every slave in the market is to find a buyer as soon as possible.[1]

We had been in Mecca about a week when Masaudi ran across an old acquaintance. This was a boy of about thirteen, Kepi by name, who, with his father, a certain Sheikh Mohammed, had travelled in the same ship with us from Mombasa to Port Said early in the year. They were then going on by way of Yembu to Medina, where they proposed to stay till near the time of the pilgrimage. Sheikh Mohammed had died on entering Mecca, about a month previous to our own arrival, and Kepi had been left in a destitute condition. He had however found out some fellow-countrymen, who had given him enough money to subsist on, and he lived in hopes of finding some party

[1] In spite of all endeavours to prevent it, and the stringent regulations in force at Egyptian and Sudan ports, a great many children are brought to Mecca every year from Africa and sold for slaves. Kidnapping in Mecca itself is not uncommon. The dealers, scoundrels for the most part, ask no questions.

of pilgrims to take him back to Zanzibar. There are, by the way, a certain number of Swahilis and Arabs from that coast living in Mecca. Of course I was careful to avoid meeting any of them, but Masaudi, having once been recognized, could not help doing so. He accordingly went round with Kepi to call on their sheikh, and thenceforward saw a good deal of them. He explained that he had come there with two rich Arabs, one a Bagdadi and the other from Muscat, with whom he was living; but being in the position of a servant he could not invite people to the house. As Kepi was a relation of some Mombasa friends of mine, I though I would do a kind action by taking him with us when we went. Masaudi informed him that his Muscat patron, hearing of his misfortunes, had decided to return him to his own country, and would give him a weekly allowance in the meantime. Kepi of course was delighted, and at once volunteered to come to us as a servant during our stay; but Masaudi told him that we had already too many retainers. He knew me by sight, so could not be allowed into the house till we were actually leaving. As a matter of fact, if Kepi had had a little more Arabic and common-sense, he would have applied to any rich pilgrim for assistance, which in nine cases out of ten would have been amply forthcoming. Any act of real charity performed on the pilgrimage, more especially in Mecca itself, is believed to cover a great multitude of sins, and most people are on the look-out for genuine cases worthy of their generosity. Orphans, moreover, are always objects of compassion among the Arabs.

Shortly after his meeting with Kepi, Masaudi returned to lunch one day bringing most welcome news. A letter had been received from the Mombasa sheikh, for whom we waited so long in Jiddah, stating definitely that neither

he nor any of his party were coming that year. This relieved all our worst apprehensions. I knew by this time that no one would take me for a European, unless given outside cause for suspicion; but the arrival of a large party of people who might recognize me from a chance meeting at any time, would have introduced a very perilous element, and certainly quite spoiled our enjoyment of our stay—always provided we managed to silence the sheikh himself, which was by no means certain. We were now assured that no more pilgrims who knew me by sight would be coming, and the only serious danger I could see ahead was from the four we had encountered at Medina, who were bound to turn up presently; not that I anticipated much difficulty in keeping out of their way in so large a place as Mecca.

We devoted a morning to the usual round of sight-seeing, which here consists in viewing various relics of the Prophet and his family, all of them, I believe, of very doubtful authenticity. The first place of interest is a group of tombs some little distance outside the town on the left of the road going to Mina. Here are buried Khadijah, the Prophet's first wife, his uncle Abbas, Abu Talib, the father of the celebrated Ali, and one or two others less well known. In general these tombs resemble those in the Bakeia at Medina; but they are kept in slightly better repair. There is some difficulty about Abu Talib, as it is moderately certain that he died an unbeliever. He gets, however, the usual fatiha, in accordance with the tolerant spirit of the age. While visiting these tombs we were beset, as usual, by crowds of beggars, who caught hold of our clothes and absolutely declined to let us go forward till we distributed largesse. It is necessary to provide one's self for the purpose with a few handfuls of

the small copper coinage known as "Nuhass," of which about a thousand go to the dollar.

On the way we met a party of Indians, and agreed to "split" with them the cost of a Mutowif to take us round the tombs and other places we had to visit. One of these Indians was a large fat man dressed in European clothes, who told us he had been British Vice-Consul at some place on the Persian Gulf. He and Abdul Wahid conversed in English the whole time, the latter occasionally translating for my benefit. The Indian spoke English so well that apart from his appearance one would never have taken him for a foreigner; he seemed to know all about everything and had visited many countries, including England and Zanzibar. He asked me if I did not find my total ignorance of English rather a nuisance; to which I replied that I had often thought of learning it, but had been deterred by the difficulty of the grammar.

This misplaced flippancy might have had serious consequences. I believe that before we managed to get rid of him he had formed in his own mind a conclusion concerning our party which was not very far from the truth. However, we heard no more of him.

The next place we visited, after leaving the tombs, was the house where the Prophet was born. We were shown a room in the basement which had in the middle of it a small iron structure hung with curtains. Here we knelt down in turn, and putting our heads through a hole in the hangings, were enabled to kiss a circular slab of marble which marks the exact spot where the event took place.[1] The house itself is quite modern, and most people are very sceptical as to the genuineness of its claims. For obvious reasons, stories relating to the early life of the Prophet and

[1] At Bethlehem there is something very similar.

his followers have nothing like the same right to credence as those of his later years, which may for the most part be considered historical.

We next visited the house where Ali was born, and went through the same performance. I had always understood that he was born in the Kaaba, and our guide admitted that there was disagreement on the subject. Finally we were shown the house where Mohammed and his wife Khadijah lived together for so many years. This is really supposed to be genuine as regards its site, though the present building is new. The house being built in a sort of hole, one has to descend a flight of steps in order to reach the set of three rooms indicated as the historic apartments. In one of these we prayed a two-rukka prayer and read a passage from our guide-books containing some appropriate reflections. There is nothing particular to see.

I have forgotten to mention the underground mosque consecrated to the believing Jinn,[1] nor does it merit any elaborate description. The general appearance and atmosphere of the place suggest the Black Hole of Calcutta.

The only other place worth visiting in Mecca is the mosque at the summit of the Gebel Abbais, but as I was told there was nothing whatever to see there, and it is rather a stiff climb, we did not go. This day was observed as a sort of public holiday in celebration of the opening of the new Turkish Parliament. A salute of guns was fired at midday and at night there was an attempt at illumination and some fireworks. A band played outside

[1] The Koran admits the existence of a class of beings intermediate between men and spirits. These are the Jinn, or "Genii," as the word commonly appears in English, who figure so largely in Arabian stories. Some are good and others evilly disposed toward mankind. The phenomena of ancient magic and modern spiritualism are attributed to their agency.

the Shareef's house, where there was a display of torches and a considerable crowd of people collected.

Mecca did not however seem nearly so enthusiastic about the constitution as either Medina or Damascus. The question seldom came up in conversation, and most people with whom I talked of it seemed rather bored with the whole subject. The local paper however was full of extravagant panegyrics about the new liberty and so on. This paper is a recent innovation in Mecca. It is published weekly under the name of *The Hedjaz*, and consists of four sheets half in Turkish and half in Arabic. If the editor would decide to stick to actual news, especially foreign intelligence, he would supply a "long-felt want." News of the outside world filters but slowly into Mecca, and usually gets distorted in the process. But as it is the telegrams are of the scantiest and most of the paper is taken up with drivel about freedom and so forth—along with fantastic schemes for the improvement of Mecca itself which if carried out would quite destroy the unique charm of the place.

I had some trouble in getting my cheque cashed. The merchant to whom I had been referred declined to honour it on the ground that, owing to some trouble that had occurred, he had no further business relations with Abdullah Waridie. On receiving, some time previously, the latter's notification that he was drawing on him, he had written on the subject and was waiting an answer. In the meantime he declined to do anything. Fortunately a letter from Abdullah, containing a draft on another merchant, arrived before my supplies were exhausted; but it might easily have been very awkard. I decided that it was less risky on the whole to carry one's money in cash.

There are no banks in the Hedjaz, owing to an absurd

belief that the business of a banker is forbidden by the Koran. There is no justification for this, and the idea has long been combated by reasonable people. The prohibition in the Koran is against usury, and obviously was never intended to apply to reasonable rates of interest on deposits of money in business affairs. The odd thing is that any one might start a bank provided only that he paid no interest at all! It is not giving the money to the bank that is considered immoral, but receiving profit on it. Stranger still, they cannot see that the business of a money-changer, of whom there are many hundreds in Mecca and Medina, involves exactly the same thing. The money-changers make their profits by giving short change; thus in changing a dollar for rupees they take a few pice as commission, and I believe their business is often very profitable.

Several Hamelidaris arrived from the Irak, some of whom had known Abdul Wahid and his family. A hamelidari is a sort of guide and contractor combined, who earns his living by bringing pilgrims to Mecca, fitting them out with all they require, providing servants, transport, and so on—very much like the "Safari" out-fitters in East Africa. Many wealthy people, especially non-Arabs, make the pilgrimage in this way; to those unacquainted with the country and language it is both cheaper and pleasanter to travel thus "personally conducted." We soon had quite a large circle of acquaintances among the hamelidaris and the parties they had brought. We gave and went to several dinner parties: ours, thanks to the excellence of Jaffa's cooking, were very successful. At the last and most ambitious of these entertainments we had no less than twelve guests. Among them was a certain Haji

Magid, the principal hamelidari of Bagdad, who runs his business on a very large scale, contracting for some hundreds of pilgrims annually, and is considered the leader of the profession. Then there were two Meccan Arabs, friends of mine, the Bagdadie infantry officer, Mohammed Saeed, two Persian merchants who had brought turquoises to Mecca, three other hamelidaris, and two Bussorah Arabs, from among the pilgrims they had brought.

The Persians occupying the rooms above our own kindly lent us their crockery and a servant. We hired another for the evening, as well as extra pipes and many other things we required. Abdul Wahid spent a busy day in making preparations for the feast. The party assembled after the Aesha prayer—about a quarter past eight.[1] Abd-ur-Rahman, whom I had also asked, unfortunately could not come. Abdul Wahid and I sat at the end of the room to receive the guests, while Masaudi had charge of the active operations. As each arrived he came forward and greeted us—then modestly retired to the other end of the room till told to "come up higher." Hagi Magid and one of the Persians, who was a descendant of the Prophet, were of course given the places of honour on our right and left respectively. Then came the infantry subaltern and one of my Meccans, and the rest anyhow. All having assembled, they were sprayed with rose water and given cigarettes, while an elaborately embroidered table cloth (hired for the occasion) was spread on the floor in the middle of the room. The dishes, as customary, were all brought in at once, and arranged in concentric circles; they consisted of pilau, kubabs with tomatoes, baringan, cold

[1] In this we were unfashionable. Most people sup after the prayer at sunset.

chickens, plain roast camel and a sort of soup; with four different kinds of sweets, macaroons and various cakes, and all the fruit obtainable. The *pièce de résistance* was the pilau, which was composed of *poussins* covered with a mixture of baked rice, nuts, almonds, sultanas, and spices of all sorts.[1] Iced drinks of various kinds, all of the teetotal variety and equally nasty, were brought as required. When all was ready I gave the signal, we drew up to the table-cloth, and started in with the customary "Bismillahi" (in the name of God). We had of course previously rinsed our hands in water brought round for the purpose. I have no doubt they attributed their having to eat with their fingers to the old-fashioned customs still obtaining in Zanzibar, but the real reason was that I could not run to enough knives and forks for them all.

After dinner pipes were brought, and cigarettes and coffee: we smoked and talked for about an hour, after which our guests departed in a body. This is done in order to save the host the trouble of seeing each one separately to the door.

Hagi Magid was a friend of the Shareef of Mecca, to whom he promised to introduce me. Unfortunately, however, he had to leave for Medina the following day, charged, so it was said, with some secret mission to the tribes, so I never got my introduction, for which I was rather sorry.

Various contradictory rumours were current as to the state of affairs at Medina. According to some accounts

[1] There is a small ice factory in Mecca, and iced cream, or rather a frozen mixture of tinned milk, dirty water, and cholera germs, is sold in the streets. Alcoholic liquor is obtainable if you know where to go for it.

an agreement had been concluded between the opposing parties. About the beginning of the new month, the remains of a caravan that had set out three weeks previously returned to Mecca, having been attacked and plundered when almost in sight of Medina. It seemed that the friendly Bedou conducting it had gone forward to reconnoitre, and about half the caravan had followed them, contrary to orders. This half had been captured, but the rest succeeded in making their escape, and returned to Mecca. As a result however of the Shareef's intervention, a temporary peace was patched up, but I am unable to say on what terms. No one seemed to think it would last very long.

The appearance of the new moon caused great excitement and much disputation. If it were seen on the first evening after the change it made the day of the journey out to Arafat a Friday—which is considered a peculiarly fortunate event, and the pilgrimage in which it occurs is held to have a value equivalent to seven pilgrimages in ordinary years. It is never quite certain whether or not the crescent will be visible on the day after the new moon, so that there is an element of uncertainty about it that prevents people deliberately choosing any particular year. In this case the question gave rise to an unusually large amount of discussion. Some people were prepared to swear they had actually seen it; others declared that it was impossible. The balance of opinion however inclined to the former statement, which seemed well supported, and eventually the Shareef pronounced in favour of it, much to every one's delight.

All this time immense numbers of pilgrims had been thronging into the city, and the crowd in the streets

increased daily. For a week past it had been quite difficult to get about. The Friday prayer in the Haram was really a most imposing ceremony. Scarcely a square yard of the great space remained unoccupied. The uniform movements of this vast concourse during the prayer, and the strange stillness that pervades, appeal strongly to the imagination. During the segeda, that phrase of prayer when the forehead is placed on the earth, not a sound but the cooing of the pigeons breaks the brooding silence; then, as the hundred thousand or more worshippers rise to their feet, the rustle of garments and clink of weapons sweeps over the space like a sudden gust. The moment the prayer is over there is a rush to perform the towaf, and a few minutes later the roar of that human whirlpool may be heard at a considerable distance from the Haram.

There are as many pigeons here as in the square of St. Mark's at Venice, and they are nearly as tame. Grain is sold in the Haram for the purpose of feeding them, but they get so much food one way and another that they can seldom be induced to partake of it. Burton remarks that they are said never to defile the Kaaba as they might be expected to do; this I believe is perfectly true, whatever the explanation may be.

On the first of the month the "Ihram," a white linen band, was fastened round the black covering of the Kaaba. It remains till the day of the festival, when the "Kiswah," that is the covering itself, is changed. A new kiswah is brought every year with the Egyptian mahmal; it is sewn in Constantinople and is said to cost £3,600. The material is a mixture of silk and cotton, dull black in colour, and embroidered with the name of God worked in black silk

about every square foot. The old one is cut up into pieces of varying sizes, which are sold for the benefit of the upkeep of the mosque and charitable purposes.

The mosque of the Haram is unique in that it has no "Kibla" or prayer direction. The Kaaba itself being the object to which they turn, the worshippers at prayer form circles round it instead of the usual straight lines looking in the direction of Mecca.

It is possible to enter the Kaaba itself on certain occasions, and I had originally intended to do so. The rules regarding it however are stricter than formerly. Only men of mature age and of particularly blameless repute were allowed to go inside, so Abd-ur-Rahman told me. It was not proper to do so unless prepared to devote the rest of one's life to religious pursuits and renounce thenceforward the world, the flesh, and the devil. Since, however, he had himself been in, the old sinner may have intended this to be facetious. There is nothing whatever inside except a single wooden pillar. It so happened that it was never open when I was present: but Masaudi saw it open on two occasions, on one of which the Shareef and the governor of Mecca entered together and swept out the interior with brooms.

The mahmal arrived from Egypt at the beginning of the month, and with it a large contingent of Egyptian soldiers. It seemed strange to see the familiar khaki uniforms and medal ribbons in this place. I was pleased to see that their turn-out was very much smarter than that of the Turkish troops who came afterwards with the Syrian mahmal. It speaks well for British methods that they should have made such good soldiers out of so unwarlike a people as the modern Egyptians. Every one

was impressed by the smartness of their uniforms and the precision of their drill.

It was now time to make preparations for the pilgrimage. We should be absent from Mecca for four whole days, and arrangements for transport and food supply had to be made. We agreed that it would not do in the circumstances to be too economical, and that our equipment had better be of a nature suitable to my supposed rank and wealth. We decided to hire three camels and three riding donkeys, and to take on one extra servant and another big tent in which to receive visitors. I gave Abdul Wahid *carte blanche* as regards the commissariat department, and he certainly "did us proud." We had lost the services of Ibrahim because he was performing a "pilgrimage by proxy." According to this idea a pilgrimage may be made on behalf of any dead person, and even in certain cases on behalf of one still living. Having arrived in Mecca and performed the towaf on his own account, the pilgrim must leave the city and change into the Ihram again somewhere outside. Thenceforward he performs all prayers and ceremonies in the name of the person he is representing. Many Sheia sects believe in the efficacy of this.

The institution of the "Hag" is as follows. On a certain fixed day in each year, the 8th of the month of Dhu'lhagga, all grown-up persons in a fit state of health must leave the city before nightfall and proceed to a village called Mina, about five miles to the north. They must pass the night here and go on the following morning to Mount Arafat, nine miles farther, where they must remain till the sun has set; then returning, they sleep at Nimrah, midway between Arafat and Mina. The third day they must get back to Mina in the morning, go through the ceremony of throw-

ing stones at the three "devils," then go on to Mecca, perform the "towaf" and the "saa," and once more return to Mina for the night. The fourth day is the festival and is spent at Mina. At noon on the fifth they return to Mecca after once more throwing the stones. From the time of leaving Mecca up to the first return there, the Ihram is worn; but as soon as possible after leaving the Haram on that occasion, it is finally doffed and exchanged for the finest raiment the pilgrim can afford, which should if possible be brand new. Those who complete these ceremonies are thenceforward entitled to the appellation of Hagi before or after their names, and are distinguished in after life by special headgear which varies in different countries. In Egypt they wear green turbans, in Zanzibar the coloured straw hats and white turbans generally worn by the Mutowifs—and so on. I could never make out exactly at what point one becomes a "hagi." According to some, to arrive at Arafat on the appointed day is sufficient to confer the title; others think it dates from kissing the black stone at the end of the "towaf" ceremony on the third day. A man visiting Mecca outside the pilgrimage season, or one who was prevented by illness from performing these ceremonies on the proper days, would not be entitled to the distinction. The inhabitants of Mecca are not exempted from making the pilgrimage every year. They have to go forth with the rest, so that for two days the city is practically deserted.

It is not possible here to enter into the origin of all these rites, even were I capable of doing so efficiently. Suffice it to say that there is a *raison d'être* for everything. It is frequently contended that much of it is ridiculous; but precisely the same may be held by the sceptic to apply

to any religious function. Like the "Lord's Supper" of the Christians, and the "Passover" of the Jews, these things are done in commemoration of past events and have a symbolical significance. Nothing is easier than to make fun of them all.

The question uppermost in the mind of every one just before the pilgrimage is whether there will be any sickness —that is to say, plague or cholera. In this particular pilgrimage the danger loomed larger than usual, owing to the terrible epidemic of the previous year. It seems that the disease appeared on that occasion about a month before the "Khuroog" (or "going out"), and steadily gained ground; but it was only after Arafat that it began to assume the gigantic proportions it finally attained. The pestilence then appeared in its most virulent form, and at Mina and during the succeeding week destroyed at the most generally accepted estimate a thousand a day. The recurrent peril of these devastating epidemics and the immense loss of life caused by them might be met to some extent by stringent regulations, preventing people setting out for Mecca with insufficient means, and by improving the sanitary conditions on the spot. The present quarantine system is useless.

This year, however, conditions were exceptionally favourable; the weather was unusually cool for the season, the number of pilgrims was not so large as usual, and there were fewer of the very poor, who, by camping in the open under most insanitary conditions, are always the focus of infection. So far as was known at the time of the Khuroog, no case of cholera or plague had occurred in Mecca though two cases of the latter disease had been discovered in Jiddah. The bubonic plague, though equally deadly,

is not nearly so much to be feared as cholera,[1] owing to its comparatively slow rate of progress, and the fact that the multitude gathered together in Mecca, which is the source of danger, disperses almost immediately after the pilgrimage.

A certain number of people left for Mina as early as the Tuesday; by midday on the Wednesday the road to that place, which led close by our house, was blocked by a seemingly endless train of camels, which continued to pass all that night and all the following day. The majority of the shops and markets were closed on Wednesday evening—a few remained open on Thursday morning; but by noon on that day all business had ceased.

We decided to postpone our own exit till as late as possible—that is to say, Thursday evening. By taking up a position on the roof we were able to overlook the road, and a strange sight it presented that day. About two o'clock the Syrian mahmal passed, escorted by a brass band and a regiment, the soldiers, like the rest, now wearing the "Ihram." Shortly afterwards came His Highness Es-seyyid Hussein, the Shareef of Mecca, riding a white horse and followed at a respectful distance by his family, and other dignitaries, also on horseback, and behind them again by a crowd of spearmen mounted on the far-famed racing camels, whose pedigree is almost as long as that of the Shareef himself. As he passed the bystanders saluted him with low "salaams," which I observed he was very careful to acknowledge. Though attired in

[1] Should, however, pneumonic plague ever appear here in epidemic form the consequences are likely to be appalling indeed.

nothing but bath towels, he yet managed to look perfectly dignified.

The Egyptian mahmal and its cortège passed a little later to the tune of the " Barren Rocks of Aden," and was followed by several Turkish regiments with colours flying and bands playing.

CHAPTER IX

THE PILGRIMAGE

At about five o'clock we ourselves donned the Ihram after making our "nia," or formal vow to perform the pilgrimage. Our luggage and servants had been sent on in the morning, and we hoped to find all in readiness on our arrival.

We mounted our donkeys, fine big animals well over eleven hands, I should say, and rode out accompanied by the hamelidari we were employing, Jaffa by name, his son, and the three Persians who had been occupying the rooms above our own suite. Progress was slow at first owing to the narrowness of the way; but on leaving the town, the road broadened out, and we got along faster, and were able to canter part of the way. The road rises gently between low stony kopjes; it is paved in some places, but elsewhere not even metalled. We reached Mina shortly after dark, and found Jaffa, our cook, awaiting us on the road.

We were conducted to our tents, which we found had been pitched a short distance beyond, on the outskirts of the great encampment, not far from the blaze of torches that indicated the quarters of the Shareef. We dined in comfort, and afterwards listened to a reading by the leader of our Persian acquaintances, who was a descendant

of the Prophet, and by way of being a learned man. Strictly speaking, we ought to have gone to the mosque of Mina for the Aesha prayer, but few people do so nowadays. One would run a very good chance of losing one's self for one thing, and this is none too safe a place after dark. We turned in early, knowing that the next day would tax all our endurance.

We struck camp at dawn and sent the servants and tents forward with the camels. I never expected to find them again; but Jaffa, our hamelidari, who had now taken charge, seemed quite confident about it. We ourselves went into Mina and waited a couple of hours in a café there before going forward. We finally started about eight o'clock. The road leaving the village runs due east, and is on the average about half a mile wide, except in two places where it passes through defiles and narrows down to a couple of hundred yards. After riding for about an hour, we halted at one of the many refreshment booths pitched at intervals along the road and had some breakfast.

To do justice to the extraordinary scene would require a descriptive skill that I do not possess. The best idea of what it is like will be gained by considering that at least half a million people are traversing these nine miles of road between sunrise and ten o'clock this day; that about half of them are mounted, and that many of them possess baggage-animals as well. The roar of this great column is like a breaking sea, and the dust spreads for miles over the surrounding country. When, passing through the second defile, we came in sight of Arafat itself, the spectacle was stranger still. The hill was literally black with people, and tents were springing up round it,

hundreds to the minute, in an ever-widening circle. As we approached, the dull murmur caused by thousands of people shouting the formula, "Lebéka lebéka, Allahooma lebéka," which had long been audible, became so loud that it dominated every other sound. In the distance it had sounded rather ominous, suggestive of some deep disturbance of great power, like the rumble of an earthquake.

Mount Arafat is a hill about four hundred feet in height, pyramidical in shape, and strewn with great boulders. At the base of it are the springs which feed the conduit leading to Mecca. On the summit there is a paved platform surmounted by a stone beacon. The surrounding country is rough and mountainous, especially to the east, but Arafat itself stands isolated in the middle of a level, scrub-covered plain. The camp is formed round the hill on the flat, and covers many square miles.

Thanks to the excellence of Jaffa's arrangements and the punctuality with which his orders had been carried out, we found our tents almost at once. Their position was on the very border of the camp—the best place, for many reasons—and several of our acquaintances were congregated in the same neighbourhood. Every one was in the best of spirits, and there was nothing in their demeanour to denote that the assembly had any religious significance. It was more suggestive of a gigantic picnic-party than anything else.

We rested an hour in the shade of our tent and then ascended the hill to pray the customary two rukkas on the platform on top. The whole of the pilgrimage was now assembled, and the view from the summit gave an idea of the vast number present. It was curious to reflect that the day before this hill was silent and deserted, as

it would be again to-morrow, and as it would remain till each succeeding year brought round the "day of Arafat." In fact, it would be almost impossible for any small party to get here at all on any other day, so infested with robbers is this part of the country.

The hour of the midday prayer arrived while we were on the summit. A salute of sixty-three guns was fired, numerous bands struck up, and the crowd cheered themselves hoarse. There were in all three six-gun batteries present, and two mountain guns carried on mules.

Descending the mountain, we inspected some large tanks filled by the springs, in which many people were bathing. The water was very dirty, and the flanks of the hill, where many thousands of the poorer pilgrims were seeking shelter among the rocks, were in a horribly dirty condition. It is not surprising that infectious diseases spread rapidly amid such surroundings; the astonishing thing is that cholera, once started, does not make a clean sweep of the whole pilgrimage.

A market had been established, where food of various sorts was being sold, and there were also a number of refreshment tents where drinks and so on were obtainable. We strolled about for some time; but finding the midday sun on our bare heads rather trying, we returned to lunch in our tent.

A rumour that had been current earlier in the day now received confirmation. It appeared that the Sheia sect was dissatisfied with the Shareef's ruling about the new moon, and had come to the conclusion that this day was not the ninth of the month, but the eighth, and that, consequently, the proceedings were null and void. They

returned to Nimrah. The tents were struck and the camels loaded up in good time, but no one might start back till the sun had actually set. When the Shareef finally gave the signal, a salute of guns was fired, and a few minutes later the great multitude was streaming across the plain and converging on the first of the two defiles we had to pass. There was a tremendous crush in the narrower parts and considerable risk to life and limb; but we managed to keep our party together and escape disaster. A ride of two hours brought us opposite the mosque of Nimrah, where we camped but did not pitch tents. The whole of the pilgrimage had not assembled by midnight, and the noise and dust would have rendered sleep impossible had we been less tired.

We started for Mina before sunrise and got there by about half-past seven. We were fortunate in securing a very good place for our tents, not far from the Shareef's pavilion and army headquarters. The first thing we had to do was to stone the three devils. The previous evening Jaffa and Masaudi had collected pebbles for this purpose —for they have to be brought from Nimrah—sixty-three of them for each person. The devils are known respectively as the "big devil," the "little devil," and the "middling devil," and they mark the positions of pre-Islamic idols which were destroyed by the Prophet. The ceremony of stoning them is of course intended to symbolize contempt and derision for all such heathen gods. I believe that it originated in the difficulty the Prophet found in completely eradicating the old superstitions, for though the people had renounced their former gods, they were still a little afraid of them, and not inclined to be too disrespectful at first. He therefore made his followers throw stones at

the old idols in order to convince them of the absurdity of their fears.

The first two "devils" are in the main street of Mina, the third a little way down on the right of the road going to Mecca. They consist of stone pillars, and stand in a sort of basin like the basin of a fountain. All of them, by the time we got there, were surrounded by a surging crowd topped by waving arms and obscured in a perfect haze of stones. It was long before we could get within shot at all, and in the end we had to discharge our missiles at long range with the result that most of mine, I am afraid, fell short. There is no necessity to hit the target, but if you go short or over it you are bound to hit somebody in the crowd. Enthusiasts who get too close frequently have a very bad time; a man standing close to me had his cheek laid open, and Masaudi got a cut on the ear.

So dense was the crowd in the streets that it took us more than an hour to get through the stoning ceremony, and the sun was high before we got back to the tent. We rested awhile and breakfasted before going out again to perform the sacrifice. Every pilgrim must this day sacrifice an animal of some sort, and a sheep or goat is usually chosen. The meat may be eaten, or preferably given to the poor. When this rule was made by the Prophet he probably did not conceive the enormous dimensions the Hag would eventually attain, for nowadays this immense number of animals is quite uselessly destroyed. Formerly the carcasses were allowed to rot on the ground, with the result that Mina for some time afterwards was practically uninhabitable. Of late years, however, large pits have been dug for their reception, which are filled

in at the end of the day. In consequence of the last year's cholera epidemic unusual precautions were taken on this occasion. The animals had all been collected together at a certain spot about a quarter of a mile from our tent. Each beast as it was sacrificed had to be taken away at once or else thrown into one of the pits, and no one was allowed to take away any live animals. This was intended to prevent slaughtering in the camp, with its attendant dangers to health. Numerous guards had been posted to enforce due fulfilment of these very excellent regulations, which were however rather irksome. We wanted some meat, and it is much easier to drive a live animal a quarter of a mile than to carry a dead one. The son of our hamelidari Jaffa, and myself, lighted upon a peculiarly fat sheep, which we decided to take home; and as we did not fancy carrying it we bribed a sentry to let us through. Unfortunately on the way back we attracted the attention of one of the doctors in charge of the sanitary arrangements, who galloped up on horseback, and after abusing us roundly made us take it back, and promised us a dose of "koorbag" if we tried it on again, which I confess I think we quite deserved. We eventually had to send the servants to bring meat.

The sheep cost from a dollar upwards, and are sold by the Bedou shepherds from the surrounding country, who must make a very good thing out of it. At least half a million are sacrificed annually on this day.

An incident that Jaffa witnessed here the year before illustrates the state of insecurity in this country. A Turk had bought a sheep, and in the act of paying for it took off a money-belt heavy with coin. The Bedoui made a sudden snatch at it, caught one end, and tried to pull

it away. The Turk hung on gamely, but the other, drawing his dagger, completely disembowelled him with a single downward stroke, and taking the belt escaped through the crowd. And this took place in the midst of a camp of half a million people, with pickets posted and sentries standing by! Some of the latter fired at the robber, but merely succeeded in killing a bystander. Once away among the hills nothing could touch him—pursuit was out of the question.

Having slain our victims, which by the way it is unnecessary to do with one's own hand, our business at Mina was over for the day, and we could go on to Mecca. Our donkeys being brought, we started directly after the noonday prayer. The road was of course very crowded, and for the first half-hour we had to move at a snail's pace.

The appearance of the city was strange indeed: everything was closed, the shops and houses were barred and bolted, yet the streets were full of people. Hot and dusty, we reached the Haram, engaged a Mutowif and performed the towaf, this time all three together. We had considerable difficulty in kissing the black stone. The Kaaba was now dressed in its new covering, and the hole left for the purpose had not yet been widened sufficiently to admit more than one head at a time. A crowd of Bedou Arabs surrounded it, amongst whom we pushed our way, Masaudi and I, for Abdul Wahid was not for risking broken ribs in the crush. The whole thing resembled what we used to call a "loose hot" at Winchester football. At last I got my head through, getting it violently bumped in the process, kissed the stone, and emerged from the throng minus the shoulder-cloth of my Ihram and a good deal of

skin belonging to different parts of my anatomy. I was more fortunate than one man, who lost his loin cloth as well and came out stark naked, much to the delight of the bystanders. Masaudi having retrieved my garment we passed out to perform the " saa " between Safa and Marawa. This was merely a repetition of what we had done on our arrival, but it took longer owing to the number of people : at times we were unable to move forward. The different parts of the prayer yelled out by the Mutowifs in charge of each party, the endeavours of the pilgrims to follow correctly, the complaints of women jostled in the throng, and the imprecations of the men, form a curious medley : " Oh God, Thou knowest—what we know not—Slowly there ! damn your ancestors !—keep us in the straight road "—and so on. One man, an Indian, who had seemingly lost his Mutowif, jogged along behind us for some time bleating like a lost sheep, " Oh God, keep me among the wicked men." What he was trying to say meant of course precisely the opposite.

Having concluded the seventh turn, we were taken before an elderly sheikh armed with a razor who, after inquiring my name and sect, proceeded to shave about a square inch of hair off my right temple, declaiming the while a prayer which I had to repeat after him. This was the formal vow to quit the state of Ihram and resume the normal secular condition. His work completed, he invoked a blessing and went on to do the same for Masaudi. Having paid him and the Mutowif for their services, we returned to our house on foot, as the donkeys had gone off to get a well-earned feed.

A black slave had been left in charge of the house, and we were the first to return, for the Persian contingent was

still at Arafat. We had some difficulty in getting water for the baths we were longing for, as a famine had set in owing to some obstruction in the conduit. We had at last to pay a rupee for two skins-full. With a sigh of relief I finally laid aside the Ihram, which henceforward might be used for bath towels without impropriety—though some people, having first washed it in water from the holy well, prefer to keep it among their household treasures in memory of this great occasion. Certainly it is a most draughty and uncomfortable costume, and in so far as it is intended as a penance abundantly serves its purpose. My back was raw from exposure to the sun, and even my head somewhat blistered.

We had now to dress ourselves in the best clothes we possessed, and we were all provided with new suits for the occasion in accordance with the accepted custom. This is done partly in honour of the festival, and partly because the new-made Hagi is believed to start with a clean "defaulter sheet," all his previous sins and errors being completely remitted, and the new clothes are held symbolical of his spiritual condition. The completion of the Hag is therefore the appropriate moment for making new resolutions, breaking off old habits, and so on.

I had white cloth robes, a black jubba, and gold sash, with a dagger; Masaudi was somewhat elaborately attired in the "Kanzu" of Zanzibar, a regimental Mess waistcoat (pattern obsolete, needless to say, as it was several years since I had paid about £10 for it), and a gold-embroidered "joho"—a garment peculiar to Muscat and its former dependencies. Abdul Wahid looked peculiarly bilious in a yellow Kuftan he had bought in Damascus.

Our donkeys having been brought, we rode back to Mina, starting just before sundown. We had not gone far when Masaudi "took a toss" which somewhat marred the beauty of his appearance, and was immediately followed by Abdul Wahid, that being his seventh in the three days. The wretched donkeys were dead beat, and could hardly keep their feet even at a walk. When we started to canter I fell off. The Arabian donkeys are given neither saddle nor stirrups, but a pile of cloths, often elaborately embroidered, is strapped across their backs, which is really much more comfortable, but difficult to hold on to, especially when compelled by one's costume to ride side-saddle.

We reached Mina just as the salute of guns was announcing the hour of the Aesha prayer. Twenty-one guns are fired by each battery at each of the five daily prayers during the days of the festival. Being very tired, we turned in directly after dinner.

Our tent was a large one, about fifteen feet in diameter. The three of us—Abdul Wahid, Masaudi, and myself—slept with our feet toward the pole and our heads outwards—like spokes of a wheel. In the middle we had collected what little luggage we had brought out and a few other odd belongings. The principal thing was a brown bag containing about £5 in gold, a beautifully bound Koran I had bought for thirty shillings two days before the "Khuroog," a string of amber beads, and a couple of spare pistols. We seem to have slept heavily that night, for when Masaudi, the first to awake, looked round next morning the bag was gone, and so were several other things, including his beautiful new turban. Some tracks in the sand and a round hole in the fly of the tent

remained to show how the thief had come upon us. There was of course nothing to be done, but the incident serves to illustrate the daring of these robbers. To break into a tent where three armed men are sleeping in the middle of a well-guarded camp and abstract their belongings is no mean feat. As a matter of fact we probably came well out of it, for had one of us stirred while the thief was in the tent a knife-thrust would probably have prolonged his sleep to the Day of Judgment. This is how people who live in such places acquire the habit, as many notice, of remaining quite motionless when they are waking from sleep until they have become completely conscious of their surroundings. It is unsafe to touch an Arab of the desert in order to wake him. Of course, had we been so fortunate as to catch the thief in the act, he would have been shot on the instant. We had frequently been warned of these dangers, and never slept without weapons ready to hand.

On our way out we had passed a party of nineteen thieves chained together on their way to Mecca. Of these six were shot, and the remainder had their right hands cut off. This latter method of punishment is sometimes considered barbarous by Europeans, but is endorsed by all reasonable people in these countries. Violent remedies are necessary when dealing with dangerous diseases.

The loss of the bag was really most annoying, as I could not afford to replace the things. This was the nineteenth "sibhah" (string of beads) that I had lost on the journey. It is a failing of mine to leave them about in all sorts of places, and it had become quite a standing joke with Masaudi.

This, the Sunday, was the day of the festival. Every one was dressed in his smartest clothes, and the whole

camp presented a very picturesque appearance. In the morning we went to see the presentation of gifts to the Shareef. His camp, which was on an artificially raised platform, comprised four huge marquees and many smaller tents. Lines of troops formed a passage and kept back the crowd. Bands paraded up and down the open space left between. The various grandees present arrived one after the other with their proper escorts, and were received by the Shareef seated on a dais at the far end of the largest marquee. They included envoys from Moslem countries, the governor of Mecca, some minor Mohammedan potentates from India and elsewhere, and other people of consequence. When all were assembled and seated, the Turkish Ambassador arrived with the Sultan's present carried on a gold dish. I cannot say of what the gift consisted, as it was covered with a cloth, but I was told that a few thousand in cash is the form it generally takes. The Shareef came to the edge of the platform to receive this visitor and escorted him within.

As soon as this ceremony was over, and the Turkish Ambassador had ridden away, the principal Meccans and pilgrims from foreign countries wishing to salute the Shareef passed in. He held in fact a sort of levée to which every one was admitted who cared to go. Masaudi went, but I declined to do so, fearing possible questions about myself which might be awkward.

The present Shareef, Seyyid Hussein, is a very popular man. He had then comparatively recently assumed office, having succeeded his brother therein, who was deposed by the Turkish Government. From what I could see he fully deserves the estimation in which he is held. While quite alive to the dignity of his position, he endea-

vours to revive the old traditions of the Prophet and the earlier Caliphs, who were accessible to all and sundry, and put into actual practice the theory of equality and fraternity inculcated by the Koran. The Shareefs who preceded Seyyid Hussein would allow no one to sit down in their presence, and were apt to treat their inferiors as so much dirt.

We were sitting in our tent smoking and listening to Masaudi's account of the levée, when we came within a little of complete disaster. The wall of our tent was down, as usual in the heat of the day, and we ourselves were squatting on the carpet. I heard a sudden exclamation from Masaudi, and saw him staring fixed and motionless over my shoulder. Looking round, I saw the cause of his behaviour. Standing within a few feet of us, and looking straight into our tent, were three of the Mombasa Swahilis whom we had encountered at Medina, together with Kepi and another man I did not know. It did not seem possible that they could miss seeing Masaudi, and if they did it was certain that they would come into the tent to greet him, when one of them at least was almost bound to recognize me. Escape was impossible, and I thought we were done. The morning sun, however, was shining right in their eyes: they saw nothing, and after a moment's pause passed on. As they turned their backs both Masaudi and I ran out of the tent at opposite sides and mingled with the crowd.

I had known of the arrival of these people, for Masaudi had ascertained that they had come with the Syrian mahmal. Here in Mina, among the vast crowd of pilgrims, the chances of meeting them had appeared infinitesimal, and I had relaxed all precautions as regards being seen

about with Masaudi. I cannot say what would have happened if they had seen me. We were by no means at the end of our resources, and I have no doubt we should have found some way to keep them quiet; all the same we had very good cause to be thankful that the necessity for doing so did not arise.

Although I was not presented to the Shareef, I got an invitation for "self and party" to join his following at prayer. This is extended to large numbers of respectable pilgrims, and we probably owed it to some of our Meccan friends, or perhaps to the hamelidaris.

During the afternoon we received visitors, who came to wish us what corresponds to a "Merry Christmas," and to congratulate Haji Ali and Haji Masaudi on their successfully accomplished pilgrimage. The chief topic of conversation is the colour of the flag flying over the quarantine station. A red flag means that all is well; but if it changes to yellow it signifies that cholera or plague has broken out. This affects all alike, for, apart from the danger, they are bound to suffer from vexations quarantine restrictions wherever they may subsequently go. If, on the other hand, the Hag is "clean," these restrictions are generally much relaxed.

In the evening we walked into the village and once more stoned the "devils." We met the Shareef and his party returning from that ceremony. All were now most gorgeously apparelled; the Shareef and the other Arabs in gold-embroidered robes, the Turks in their uniforms, and the foreign visitors in their national costumes.

The Bedou camel-guards, who always accompany the Shareef, are a very fine-looking body of men. The camels themselves are of a particular breed renowned

for its speed and beauty, and as different in appearance from the ordinary camel as the Derby winner from a dray-horse. They carry the mails from Mecca to Jiddah in a little over three hours. It is a fine sight to see an Arab spearman mounted on his camel, when both are fully equipped, though how they manage to stick on when going at full speed I cannot imagine.

I inquired whether it would be possible to buy one, and was told it might be done with some trouble, but the price for a young camel of the very best breed might be anything up to £150. A really first-class riding-camel, however, not absolutely thoroughbred, might be bought for about £50.

After the stone-throwing, we visited the mosque of Mina, which is not particularly interesting. The square was full of poor people camping there, and very dirty; the year before it had been full of dead and dying, and was a regular hotbed of infection. It is very odd that people should be allowed to defile the place in the disgusting manner they do. Many have been the complaints about it for years past, but nothing is done.

In the evening there were fireworks, more remarkable for quantity than quality, with much singing and band-playing, which continued to a late hour.

The following was the day of the "rugoo," or return to Mecca; but none might leave Mina till after the noon-tide prayer. The hour was saluted by ninety guns, and immediately there was a rush to get off. The narrow streets of Mina were soon almost impassable, and many were injured in the crush. We three started together on our donkeys, but soon got separated. Abdul Wahid had a narrow escape, his donkey being knocked off its

legs, and he himself thrown under a camel, which passed right over him, fortunately without treading on him. We had once more to throw the stones, which in the circumstances was more difficult and dangerous than ever. We left Mina at a quarter to one, but did not reach our house till nearly five o'clock. Abdul Wahid was the first to arrive and Masaudi the last, owing to his being thrown and losing his donkey in the turmoil. I was the most fortunate, for I came through scatheless. Our camels did not arrive till nightfall; but in view of the state of the road, we were lucky to get them when we did.

The reason for this inconvenient and dangerous rush is to be found in an old rule that pilgrims must leave Mina after noonday and before sundown. This was all very well when they numbered a few thousands; but compliance with it now is really quite absurd. Every year many people are injured to no purpose. The same applies to many of the other rites, such as the wasteful sacrifice on the third day. If the money so uselessly expended were given in charity or spent on public works, it would surely be better; or if the animals must be killed, they might be distributed throughout the year, and be sufficient to feed all the poor in Arabia. The Prophet obviously never intended the sacrifice to become the public danger it is now; more likely it was meant to ensure provision for all on the day of the festival.

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The return to Mecca concluded the pilgrimage, and I shall pass over the remainder of the time we spent there in a few words. I was rather disappointed to find that we could not leave, as we had intended, on the following

day. The objection was that the majority of the troops holding the forts and blockhouses on the road to Jiddah had been drafted into Mecca for the week, and the road, left unguarded, was in consequence unsafe. I was all for taking our chance and riding through, but strict orders had been issued that no one was to leave the city until formal permission was granted; and I was assured we should be stopped and sent back if we attempted to do so. This was perfectly right, for the danger is by no means imaginary, and the Government are justified in taking what measures they think fit to ensure the pilgrim's safety, on which their own credit depends; but it was inconvenient all the same. Nothing more remained to be done; we had seen all there was to see, and I had good reasons for disliking the delay. To make matters worse, the governor decided that the absence of disease in the city justified him in granting his hard-worked men a couple of days' rest before sending them back to their posts. Had there been cholera the authorities would have been at pains, of course, to get rid of the pilgrims as quickly as possible; but this year there was no particular necessity to do so.

The end of it was that we had to wait six days more, which we spent not unpleasantly on the whole; in fact, but for my anxiety to get away, I should have enjoyed it. We had by now made many friends, and I no longer felt a stranger or compelled to stand on ceremony as at first. I bought one or two things as mementoes with my fast-diminishing stock of money, among them a rather nice carpet which had been brought from Bagdad by one of the hamelidaris. This was in reality a present, but the sort of present that one can only accept on condition that

the giver takes one in return, which, of course, has to be of equal or superior value.

I was rather horrified to find what it had all cost. What with the hire of donkeys, camels, tents, and servants, the fee I had to pay the hamelidari for his services—which were very well worth the money—and many minor expenses incidental to the pilgrimage, the bill was not a short one. When all was settled up, I had barely £20 left with which to get my party back to Jiddah, and from there to our various destinations. Masaudi had expended the whole of his small savings in charitable donations, and Abdul Wahid had got rid of all he had brought long before in presents intended for friends in Germany, so that I could look for no help from them. I could perhaps have borrowed the money, but I preferred to take my chance of "raising the wind" in Jiddah. Kepi bade fair to add another unnecessary expense; but having promised to take him, I was determined to do so.

The only notable incident that occured during this period was the arrest and imprisonment of the whole of the hamelidari contingent from Bagdad. I could never quite make out what the trouble was about, but it was something to do with their having infringed the Government regulations with regard to the hire of camels from the Bedou. They were all released before we left. A considerable number of pilgrims were bound for Medina, including most of the Persians, who had wisely deferred their visit to that place till after the Hag. I have no doubt our friend Hamza made a good thing out of them when they got there. We, having already "done" Medina, were frequently asked for advice about lodgings,

etc., and had much pleasure in recommending Iman's establishment.

At last, on the Friday evening, the crier announced that travellers to Jiddah might leave when they pleased. We had made all our arrangements beforehand, so were able to get away at daybreak the following morning. For a variety of reasons, I had determined to ride through with Abdul Wahid on donkeys, leaving Masaudi to follow with Kepi and our luggage on three camels. I knew that every day would make a difference as regards certain arrangements I had made to meet my brother in Egypt, and hoped by arriving at Jiddah among the first that I should be able to have all in readiness to embark directly Masaudi arrived.

Kepi had been warned to be ready for some days past, and Masaudi brought him to the house that night. It took him some little time to recognize me, but he did eventually, when we were together in Jiddah. We engaged an Arab friend of Jaffa's who was in poor circumstances to accompany Masaudi, for which we agreed to pay him one dollar, and give him a camel to ride. This I thought advisable because he knew the ropes, which Masaudi did not, and indeed it was fortunate that I took this precaution, as otherwise they might have been delayed for days. The camel-men, as we knew by experience, are a set of thieves of the worst description, and will raise all sorts of difficulties if they think there is the smallest profit to be derived from so doing.

We paid our farewell visits to the Haram at different times that night, for we were busy packing and making our final arrangements for leaving. We paid off Jaffa the cook, and Ibrahim, our other servant, and were glad

to hear that they had found work with a party returning to Medina. Both had turned out very well, and the memory of Jaffa's cooking makes me want to travel in Persia. I had supplemented our depleted exchequer by selling my rifle and the various articles of camp-equipment, for which we had no further use.

In the morning we waited till Masaudi's camels were loaded up and fairly under way, then, after bidding good-bye to Mohammed Saeed and promising to stay with him next time we came, we started ourselves. Our two donkeys were remarkably fine animals, clipped in a curious fashion peculiar to Mecca, and very well cared for. The Bedoui in charge of them rode a somewhat smaller beast, and, as usual, made himself as much of a nuisance as possible in the time at his disposal. I had to pay £1 apiece for these donkeys, but as we hoped to get through in one day, it was worth the money.

The first trouble arose in connection with the passes we had to obtain for the donkeys, and in consequence of an elaborate and carefully thought out scheme on the part of our donkey-boy to swindle us out of two rupees. I was for paying and getting on, but Abdul Wahid, though not cast in an heroic mould, as may have become apparent in the course of this narrative, would, I believe, cheerfully suffer martyrdom rather than be done out of a single "nuhass." We argued and finally appealed to the sheikh, who sent us on to the Mudir, who was not in, and so on. Altogether we lost about an hour.

Getting started once more, we rode up the long, straight street by which we had entered the town, passed the guard, who inspected our papers, and found ourselves at last on the high road heading for home.

I enjoyed the first part of that ride: the morning air was sweet and cool, our donkeys were fresh, and the pace was good. Moreover, it was pleasant to reflect that this was the final stage of an enterprise which had been an almost unqualified success; in front lay rest and safety, while the dangers and hardships were all behind. As I recalled our experiences I could not help seeing how much that success was due to sheer good luck, and how thankful I ought to be that nothing had gone amiss.

Early though we had started we had been by no means the first to leave Mecca. Many of the pilgrims had left during the night, and also the Egyptian mahmal, which we passed near Bahreia. We were told that it was going by sea to Yembu and thence to Medina. In ordinary years it journeys from Cairo overland, visiting Medina before the Hag; but the usual route had been altered on this occasion owing to the disturbed state of the country.

About midday we reached Bahreia, where we lunched and rested an hour. On restarting we found that we had passed all the camels that had set out before us, and were now riding along an empty road. Catching up with a party of eight Jiddah merchants, also on donkeys, we decided to keep with them by way of precaution against possible robbers. Though the road was now garrisoned in the usual manner it was still unsafe for small parties, especially about dusk. We continued, between walking and cantering, to make an easy six miles an hour, till just before sundown we emerged from the foot-hills and saw before us across the plain the white minarets of Jiddah. It was now good going, and we calculated on entering the town before it was quite dark. Our donkeys seemed to recognize their goal, and started

forward at a smart canter. A disappointment however was in store for us: as we neared one of the fortified posts a soldier ran out and, planting himself in the road with outstretched arms, brought us to a halt. He told us that strict orders had been issued that no one was to travel after dark, and that we must sleep where we were, under the protection of the blockhouse. We naturally protested vigorously, but to no purpose; the N.C.O. in charge who came out in response to our summons said his orders were explicit. We tried bribery, but it was no good—for once in a way. Finally at my suggestion he consented to let us go forward if we would sign a paper saying that we did so entirely at our own risk and against his advice; this we quickly wrote out and signed, but before it was ready he had changed his mind again and absolutely forbade us to move on pain of being fired on by his men. Getting held up like this did not so very much matter to us, but it was very annoying for the Jiddah men, who had doubtless comfortable homes and good dinners waiting for them an hour away. Some of us were in favour of running the blockade: we did not believe they would really shoot or that they would hit anything if they did. However we were out-voted, and in the end had to make the best of it and bivouac where we were. There was a small shed in which lived an old Bedoui woman who sold coffee to travellers, and kept beside a few provisions—some eggs and a little very stale bread. Abdul Wahid, displaying his sound business instinct, took advantage of our altercation with the N.C.O. to "corner" the whole supply, with the result that he and I fared comparatively well. Before turning in we had a conversation with one

of the soldiers, who told us that a donkey boy leaving Jiddah that morning had been shot dead by a highwayman close to this fort. The robbers' usual method is to "snipe" the travellers from a range of two hundred or three hundred yards, and when they make a hit gallop in and plunder their victim, taking their chance of being observed and fired on by any blockhouses within range. It would be a great improvement if double the number of these blockhouses were constructed, and as they might well be of smaller size no great extravagance would be involved. The posts at present are too far apart, and consequently do not serve their purpose so efficiently as they might do. This soldier's description of the life they led in these small garrisons reminded me of South Africa.

After spending a cold and uncomfortable night we started as soon as it got light and entered Jiddah before sunrise. We went first to our former lodgings, and found that the landlord had gone to Mecca, but had left a message that we could have the rooms if we wanted them. We put our things there in the cleanest place we could find, for since the owner had left a fortnight before, the rooms apparently had been neither swept nor garnished. Dust accumulates quickly in Jiddah, and so do other things, as I was shortly to discover. A feeling of discomfort in that region caused me to examine my legs and ankles—to find a crawling mass of fleas ascending in a phalanx! I took to flight promptly and, seeking the nearest chemist, bought a large quantity of the local version of Keating's: but all the insecticides known to science would not have saved me from being badly bitten. Abdul Wahid, having retrieved our things,

joined me, and we breakfasted with our old friend the Christian restaurant-keeper, and then made a round to find fresh accommodation. At last we came upon a decently clean room that seemed suitable, though we had to pay an inconveniently long price for it. However, I began to realize that the money I had left would in any case be insufficient to get us home, and as more must therefore be raised somehow, I ceased to bother about further economies.

It was not however till we began to go into the question of passages that we realized how very awkward it was going to be. We had heard in Mecca a rumour which had seemed to us incredible, to the effect that no pilgrims other than those of Egyptian origin, and furnished with Egyptian passports, would be allowed to enter Egypt till after the return of the mahmal, that is to say, for about another two months. To our consternation this turned out to be perfectly true. The steamship agents declined to sell us tickets to any Egyptian port, or, more politely, warned us that we should be foolish to buy them as we were certain to be sent back if we attempted to land there. We consulted an old Turkish officer sitting outside a café, explaining that we had urgent business in Egypt, and asking his advice as to how we were to get there. He said he only knew of two ways: one was to buy passports from some poor Egyptian pilgrims, which could easily be done, and travel disguised as Egyptians; but he shook his head over our chances of imposing on the landing authorities. We neither of us looked the least like natives of that country. The other way, he said, was to go to Beyrout, change our passports for others without the Mecca endorsement,

and from there make our way to Port Said. He said the authorites would readily connive at this, as they were disgusted with these restrictions. The objection was that we should be in quarantine for ten days at Tor, four at Beyrout, and four more at Port Said, which was an appalling prospect—and would beside ruin a shooting trip in the Sudan that I had planned with my brother.

Masaudi did not turn up, and I began to get rather anxious about him. We were also very uncomfortable without the luggage, being badly in need of a wash and change. We spent the time smoking in the cafés and trying to devise some practicable scheme for getting into Egypt. One that we considered, was to go down to Aden, and there change into a P. and O. or other homeward-bound ship. The objections to this were quarantine and lack of funds. I then thought of going straight across to Suakim, but it turned out that there was no boat for a fortnight, and that we should be at least ten days more in quarantine there, added to which the Sudan contingent of pilgrims, mostly African negroes, are not the most desirable travelling companions. Had I been possessed of sufficient ready money I might have chartered a dhow and sailed over, concocting on the way some fairy tale for the benefit of the port authorities on the other side.

Masaudi arrived on the afternoon of the second day. The machinations of the camel-men, who had started their little games the moment our backs were turned, had been the cause of many hours' delay. They had demanded the whole of the fare before leaving Mecca, and had actually offloaded the camels on compliance being refused. Masaudi was in favour of teaching them

manners with his sword, but the Arab we had engaged showed very good sense, himself assisted in undoing the ropes and, declining to take the camels at all, went off to the Mudir, who arrested the delinquents and made them return the money that they had already received, and (I hope) ordered them twenty-five of the best as a memento of the incident.

It thus became necessary to find a new lot and make a fresh agreement—all of which took time. But in any case I was far too relieved to see him safe to have grumbled at the delay even had it been his fault.

The story of our journey may well close at this point. We separated at Jiddah. Masaudi and Kepi went to Mombasa, Abdul Wahid to Persia, and I myself to Egypt. The difficulty about the quarantine was successfully overcome in the end. This was in no way attributable to my own ingenuity, but was due entirely to the kindness of a fellow-countryman.

It may occur to the reader who has done me the honour to follow me thus far that the inhabitants of the holy cities and the others we associated with in the course of these four months must have been of singularly unobservant disposition, or that I myself must be a past master in the art of deception. Neither however is the case; my success in imposing on those we met is to be explained by their ignorance and lack of interest in the outside world, even in that part of it which professes Islam. There are so many different sects in Islam, and its adherents are found in so many different countries, that I seriously believe that if some one invented for himself a country and a language that do not exist at all, and journeyed thus to Mecca, no one there would

know enough geography to find him out. Yet withal they are quick enough in their way, and if some Mutowif would take the trouble to write a book on ethnography in its relation to the Islam of to-day, and classify the different races that come to Mecca—such a deception as I practised would become impossible. But no works of reference exist, and the excellent school-books published by the Beyrout press are generally neglected by Moslem Arabs, who manifest indifference, and even contempt, for knowledge in every form except that of languages. Their idea of a learned man is an able linguist. This was not the intention of the Prophet, who said, "Seek knowledge, if you have to go to China for it."

This is meant only as a generalization, and so is the bad character I have given them in other respects. There are many exceptions. Well-informed and energetic men are to be found in Mecca, and so likewise are men who live upright and sober lives. Not every Meccan is hopelessly depraved, nor will every Mutowif take "*une vessie pour une lanterne.*"

We did, as I have related, occasionally excite some suspicion. Our two servants, in spite of the fact that both were Persians and knew little Arabic, must have had their doubts. Had these suspicions ever become anything more definite we should have heard about it fast enough in the shape, probably, of an extravagant demand for "hush-money." It must be remembered that very great credit would accrue to any one who might discover and denounce an "unbeliever."

I would advise any one who wants to see Mecca to go at the pilgrimage season because it is easier to get there for one thing, and much more interesting for another.

I do not think the measures I adopted as regards language, disguise, and so forth can be much improved upon. In any case I strongly recommend the traveller to enter the country in disguise and not wait to assume it till after his arrival at the port. Neglect of this obvious precaution has led to several would-be pilgrims being found out at Jiddah and ignominiously sent back. While in Mecca the traveller must be very careful to avoid the society of pilgrims from the country to which he is supposed to belong, and he should not on any account allow his Mutowif to come to his house; indeed it is better if possible not to employ the same one twice. The less he has to do with them in any way the better—they are too sharp.

With due observance of these precautions, a passable knowledge of Arabic and Moslem ceremonial, and proper vigilance, the pilgrimage to Mecca may be made in disguise without running any risk worth mentioning.

Medina is much the more dangerous place of the two, and no traveller should adventure himself there who is not very thoroughly at home in his Oriental character. From what I have since heard I am disposed to attribute our escape to a series of happy chances rather than to good management on my own part.

Finally as to the law on the subject. The Ottoman Government claims the right to exclude foreign travellers from the Hedjas, and to expel them if found there, while disclaiming responsibility for anything that may happen in consequence of their being there. This position is accepted in practice by the other Powers, whose representatives however are not supposed to "give away" any one making the journey in secret of whom they may

come to have knowledge. There is nothing illegal in going there—it is merely contrary to regulation. Of course it does to some extent involve defying the "wishes and express injunctions" of the authorities, which is regarded in some quarters as a very terrible crime.

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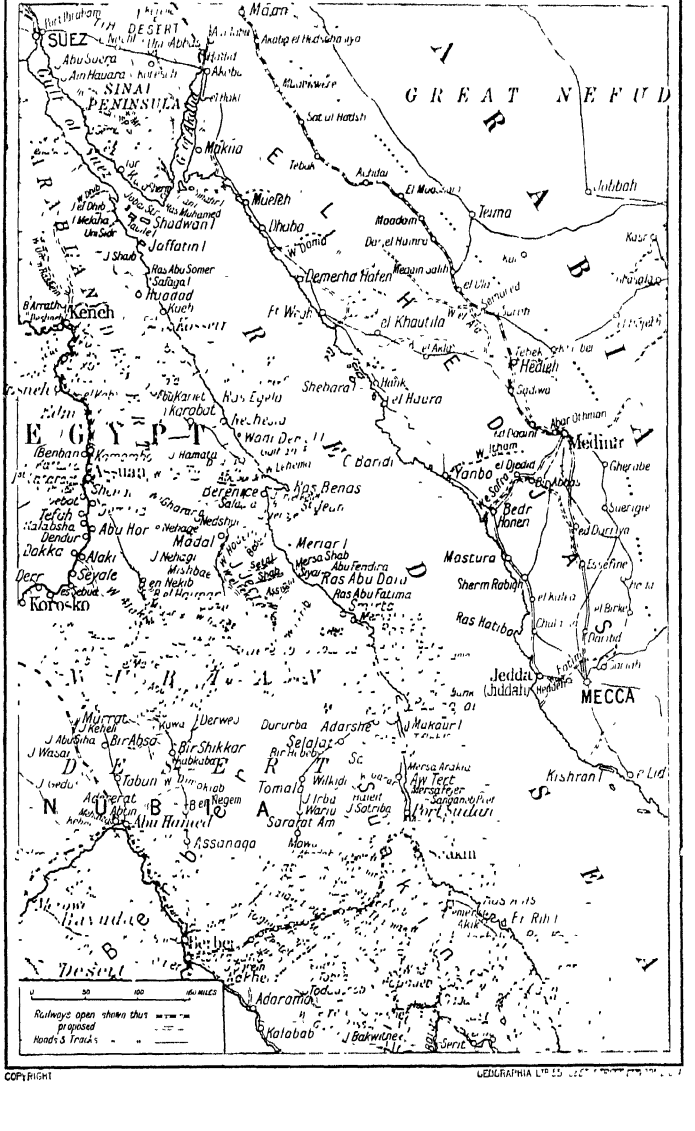
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